Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts

Sangeet Natak Akademi

present

Akhyan

आख्यान

A Celebration of
Masks, Puppets and Picture Showmen Traditions of India

20 Oct to 20 Nov 2010

Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts

No. 3, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Road, New Delhi 110 001

Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts

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Shiva escorted by Policemen, detail of a Santal creation scroll
Photo courtesy: Prof. Jyotindra Jain fig 16)

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Laxmi, Seraikela Chhau,Jharkhand
Photo courtesy: IGNCA

Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts
(IGNCA), New Delhi

The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), established in the memory of Smt. Indira Gandhi in 1987, is an autonomous centre encompassing the study and experience of all the arts and each form with its own integrity, yet within a dimension of mutual inter-dependence, inter-relatedness with nature, the social structure and cosmology. This view of the arts, integrated with and essential to the larger matrix of human culture, is predicated upon Smt. Gandhi's recognition of the role of the arts as essential to the 'integral quality of a person, at home with himself and society.' It partakes of the holistic world-view so forcefully articulated throughout the Indian tradition and emphasized by modern Indian leaders, especially Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore.

The IGNCA's view of the arts encompasses a wide area of studies, such as creative and critical literature, written and oral; the visual arts, ranging from architecture, sculpture, painting and graphics to general material culture; photography and film; the performing arts of music, dance and theatre in their broadest connotation; and all else in festivals, fairs and in lifestyles that has an artistic dimension. It is in the Centre's agenda to explore, study and revive the dialogue between India and her neighbours, especially in the South and South East Asia, in areas pertaining to the arts.

The uniqueness of the IGNCA's approach to the arts lies in the fact that it does not segregate the folk and the classical, the oral and the aural, the written and the spoken, and the old and the modern. Here, the emphasis is on the connectivity and the continuity between the various fields that ultimately relate human-to-human and human-to-nature.

The IGNCA manifests its academic work in its publications, international and national seminars, conferences, exhibitions and lecture series. The schools and other educational institutions are within the focus of the outreach programme of the IGNCA.

To fulfill the objectives outlined in the Conceptual Plan of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and its principal aims, its functions are organised through five divisions that are autonomous in structure but inter-locked in programming. The Kala Nidhi Division comprises a Reference Library of multi-media collections, which includes printed books, slides, microfilms, photographs and audio-visual material, a conservation laboratory, a multi-media unit and the Cultural Archives. The Kala Kosha Division undertakes fundamental research and investigates the intellectual traditions in their dimensions of multi-layers and multi-disciplines. The focus of Janapada Sampada Division shifts from the text to the context. Its activities focus on the lifestyle study programmes comprising Loka Parampara, which revolves around a community, and the Kshetra Sampada, which revolves around a region. The Kala Darshana Division provides a forum for inter-disciplinary seminars, exhibitions and performances on unified themes and concepts. The Cultural Informatics Laboratory (CIL) acts as a focal point for digitization of rare manuscripts, books, photographs, slides and audio-video collection not only of IGNCA but also the other organizations working in the Department of Culture. The Sutradhara Division provides administrative, managerial and organisational support and services to all the other Divisions.

Sita, Shadow Puppet,Karnataka
Photo courtesy: SNA

Sangeet Natak Akadami
(SNA), New Delhi

Sangeet Natak Akademi is an autonomous body under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. It was set up in 1952. Since its inception, the Akademi has been functioning as the apex body for the performing arts in the country, preserving and promoting the vast intangible heritage of India's diverse culture expressed in many forms of music, dance and drama. In furtherance of its objectives, the Akademi collaborates with the governments and arts academies of the different States and Territories of the Union of India, as also with the major cultural institutions in the country. The Akademi also establishes and looks after institutions and projects of national importance in the field of performing arts. Over the years, it has set up many centres all over the country in this field.

The Akademi Awards are the highest national recognition conferred on practicing artists. The Akademi also confers Fellowships on eminent artists and scholars of music, dance and drama. The Akademi's Fellowship (Akademi Ratna) carry a prize money of Rs. 3 Lakh and the Akademi Puraskar (Akademi Awards) carries a purse money of Rs. 1 Lakh. From The year 2006, the Akademi has also instituted awards to young artists in the name of Ustad Bismillah Khan which are called 'Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar'. There are 33 awards under this category.

The Akademi subsidizes the work of institutions engaged in teaching, performing, or promoting music, dance and theatre; gives grant-in-aid for research, documentation and publishing in the performing arts; organizes and subsidizes seminars and conferences of subject specialists; and documents and records the performing arts for its audio-visual archive. As the apex body specializing in the performing arts, the Akademi also renders advice and assistance to the Government of India in the task of formulating and implementing policies and programmes in the performing arts. Additionally, the Akademi carries a part of the responsibilities of the state for fostering cultural contacts between various regions in India, and between India and the world.

The Akademi has a large archive, comprising audio/video tapes, photographs, and films. The Akademi maintains a reference library consisting of books in English, Hindi and some regional languages. The Akademi has a gallery of musical instruments in Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi, where more than 200 musical instruments are displayed. It also has a documentation unit, which has recorded maestros in the field of music, dance and theatre. The Akademi also publishes literature on relevant subjects on a small scale.

Akhyan: Masks, Puppets & Picture Showmen Traditions of India - *An Introduction*

Sreekala Sivasankaran

Akhyan- the celebration of Masks, Puppets and Picture Showmen Traditions of India at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts explores diverse meanings deciphered through a set of speaking objects; meanings which are arbitrary, yet coherent; meanings embedded in the social and also in the political realms; meanings derived from various traditions through unremitting construction and reconstruction of the "self"/"selves" belonging to plural cultures of India. Masks, puppets and picture scrolls are three such narrative traditions wherein the human agency exists in specific kinds of relations with the "inanimate" objects, where concealment and revelation go hand in hand, creating a multiplicity of meanings. While in masks and puppets, this relationship is relatively more intimate and intertwined, where the identity of one comes to inhabit the other, in picture scrolls, the relationship remains rather distant and the narrator and the scroll retain their individual identities and roles.

In consistent engagement with the varied and complex world of performative traditions, the IGNCA has earlier addressed, particularly in the case of masks, the socio-cultural, historical and phenomenological contours in elaborate manner. The International Seminar, *Rupa-Pratirupa,* organized in 1998 explored the many different ancient and contemporary notions in the world about the nature of Mind-Man-Mask interrelationships.

This time, *Akhyan* brings together three distinct traditions of masks, puppets and picture scrolls of India, focusing on the artistic expressions in the visual and kinetic narratives. At the core of the ever-fascinating multiplicity of Indian storytelling lie the epic worlds of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and the Puranas. Regional legends and ballads add to the richness of this repertoire. The more contemporary expressions in these genres synthesize influences from across cultures and emerging technologies with traditional forms, creating socially and politically conscious visual narratives. Through exhibition, performances, demonstrations, workshops and public lectures, *Akhyan* seeks to unravel the many layers of these narrative complexes.

If masks symbolize the human endeavor to establish a relationship between the phenomenal world and the inner person through the art of impersonation, the puppets are objects given life by the will and spirit of humans. In the art of the picture showmen, the verbal complements the visual within a composite narrative interpreted through the human agency. However, in the performance process, these relationships may shift, where the performer and the performed intertwine and intersect, shifting the sources of volition from one another in crucial interactivity between them and with the audience. In *Tolu Bommalatta* of Andhra Pradesh, the *ketigadu* puppet converses with the puppeteer as equal, addresses the audience directly and moves in and out of the epic narration, subsuming boundaries[i]. In other words, the performing objects are "suffused with a life force transforming those who play with and through them"[ii].

This life force sometimes extends outside the immediate context of enactments and there are instances in India where masks and scrolls are preserved at a sacred place near temples, treated as living shrines, or destroyed immediately after performance. In *Prahlada Nataka* of Orissa, a large, 4 feet high mask of Narasimha is kept in a temple of Vishnu and receives offering along with the deity[iii]. Interestingly, as Jyotindra Jain points out in the case of Pabuji scrolls in Rajasthan in his article on "The Art of Indian Picture Showmen: Tradition and Transformation" in this volume, "when a scroll has outlived its life or has proved to be inauspicious, the *bhopa* (priest-cum-narrator-singer) and the painter are said to take it to Pushkar lake on an auspicious day,... and request him (the spirit) to leave the scroll-shrine, which when so deserted by the spirits, can be immersed in the lake in the same fashion as the charred bones of a dead person".

Masks: Inside and Outside

Masks and their manifold forms have been significant modes by which cultures have given voice to their powerful cognitions and most subtle emotions, to define their inner and outer realities. The human beings' perception of the phenomenal world, comprising the vegetal, the animal, the terrestrial and the celestial, are manifested in the world of masks. While in every-day human interactions, masking is often viewed as suspect, as impeding or disfiguring truth, masks have been used in many performative traditions as agencies not just to conceal but also to depersonalize or protect the wearer and also as instruments of revelation to connect the seen with the unseen.

The mask's performativity unravels within particular contexts, as part of a ritual, carnival, theatre, dance and so on. Archaeological evidence from the ancient contexts, especially from some Harappan sites in the form of terracotta masks, masked figures in rock paintings and masked faces on Harappan seals seem to suggest that masks were largely meant to be used in rituals; their use for theatrical purposes may be deduced from the life-size specimens of early historical period from Chirand and Rangmahal and also their

use as death masks is evident from the gold and silver specimens of Manipur used for covering the human skull as part of some mortuary rites[iv].

Over the time, various forms of masks and their manifold uses are discernible in many ritual and theatrical traditions of India where the masked performer is an amalgam of the animate and the inanimate, the other and the self, the static and the dynamic. Thematically diverse and richly visual, the masks cover a wide range of portrayals of humans, gods, demons, animals and so on. While performance forms like *Krishnanattam* of Kerala feature beautifully carved and painted masks, sparingly used for characters like Jambavan, Narakasura and Yama, *Chhau* dances of West Bengal deploy a wide variety of papier and cloth mache masks to portray humans, gods, demons and animals. In Seraikela, a variant of this tradition was expanded to include metaphysical themes incorporating anthropomorphic masks for characters such as night, moon and so on. The *Ankiya Bhaona* in Assam uses masks for divine representations, kings and demons, sub-human figures, etc. Masks from the Himalayan regions portray ancestral spirits and totems, revealing the intimate human relationship with natural and supernatural phenomena.

The various interlocking and competing strands of Hinduism have frequently deployed masks. The *Shakti* masks, representing the more active, feminine aspects of the divine power, can be found mainly in West Bengal and Southern India. The *Narasimhi* mask, half woman and half lioness, used in the *Gambhira* performance in the Malda region of West Bengal is the *Shakti* counterpart to *Narasimha*[v]. In *Mudiyettu*, the ritual theatre of Kerala based on the mythological tale of the battle between goddess Kali and demon king Darika, the mask of the goddess is placed in the centre of the head dress of the performer. In different parts of the country, multifarious masks and their uses are discernible in communities which blended local traditions with stories from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. In the *Ramman* performances in Garhwal, masks are often worn over the head, rather than on the face. While characters like Rama, Lakshman, Sita and Hanuman in *Ramman* wear no masks, the Narasingh devata is represented through a mask weighing around 20 kilograms. *Aji Lhamu* mask performance of Arunachal Pradesh narrates the Buddhist version of Ramayana. In the Buddhist tradition, the *Chham* dances use masks of meditative and *dharma* safeguarding deities. The masks of Yak dance of Sikkim have didactic messages on the necessity of protecting animals.

While masks in India have strong connections with the Hindu and Buddhist religions and rituals, as well as with folk and tribal traditions, rarely we get to see their existence within the Muslim tradition. An exception has been the *Pulikkettikali* or *Pulikali* (tiger dance), performed during Muharram in Kerala, where performers painted their face and entire body with colour and designs of the tiger skin. Nowadays, *Pulikali* is part of Onam celebrations where all communities participate and move around in tiger costumes and steps resembling tiger's movements. Apart from the painted bodies, tiger head masks are also used nowadays.

In the present scenario, we get to see masks finding an important place not only in festivals like Durga Puja, Ram Navami, and Dussehra but also in experimental theatrical performances to address socio-political issues[vi]. Apart from the physical masks, used externally over the face or other body parts of the performer, masking is also done in dance and dramatic forms through gestural narratives, costumes and make up. These highlight characteristics of specific character formations and moreover create depth where none existed. In Indian classical dance and theatre, colourful paint and intricate deigns on faces are abundant.

Puppets: Agencies of Revelation

Puppetry takes many forms in the process of animating objects by human agency. As objects deciphering meanings within a narrative structure and as characters made alive through artistic brilliance, puppets, within a system of language operate as agencies of revelation. Though the origin of puppetry in India is unknown, there are references to different kinds of puppets in the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Buddhist work called Therigatha. *Sutradhara* in classical Indian theatre literally means 'holder of strings' which refers to the one who introduces and directs the play. While anyone can move a puppet, it needs a skilled puppeteer to give life to it.

In India, puppetry is a living tradition. There are mainly four genres of puppetry commonly found — Shadow puppets, Rod puppets, String Puppets and Glove puppets. Shadow puppets are flat puppets that are operated against the rear of a tightly stretched white cloth screen with a light behind it so that the audience looks at the shadow of the puppet on the screen. Shadow puppets are found in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa, and Tamil Nadu. Glove puppet is also known as hand puppets. In this form of puppetry, the puppeteer wears the puppet like a glove and fits the fingers into the hollow head of the puppet and controls its movements. This form of puppetry is found commonly in Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal. The rod puppets, often larger than glove puppets are supported and controlled by rods of various types and sizes. Rod puppets are commonly found in Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal. String puppets are also known as marionettes, where the body parts of the puppets are connected through strings which are also used to control their movement. This form of puppetry is prevalent in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Orissa, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

Traditionally, Indian puppets enact stories from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas. Local myths and legends also feature significantly in puppetry. *Amar Singh Rathore* in Rajasthan is a popular narrative conveyed through the *kathputli* string puppets by the community of puppeteers known as Nats or Bhats.

The art of puppetry in India has evolved considerably by interacting with other art forms and media over the years. The linkages or parallels between the traditional theatre of *Yakshgana* and string puppetry in Karnataka, *Kathakali* and glove puppets of *Pava Kathakali* in Kerala, *Bhaona* and string puppets in Assam and between *Jatra* and rod puppets in West Bengal are noteworthy[vii].

In the contemporary scenario, we get to see introduction of new themes into the traditional forms, where issues like preservation of forests, family planning etc are subtly woven into the epic stories. Also, innovations in the form, where different styles are merged systematically to produce more cohesive meanings, reflect various experiments in the artistic and utilitarian aspects of puppetry. Puppetry is also used in popular media like television shows, in social institutions like schools as part of educational programmes and in hospitals as part of health care programmes[viii].

Picture Showmen: Unfolding Narratives

Picture scrolls or *pata chitras* have been one of the most popular means of story telling since ancient times in India. They are illustrated narratives sequentially painted upon long strips of primed cloth or as in present times, upon layers of newspapers pasted to be made thick and then joined lengthwise to one another. Indian traditions of storytelling with the accompaniment of painted panels or scrolls can be traced back to the 2nd century B.C.[ix] Numerous literary references testify their widespread popularity. Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jaina literature contains references to the art of the painted scrolls which were used to educate and entertain viewers.[x] Scrolls have often been considered sacred objects. When they are no longer usable, they are deconsecrated and then ritually discarded.

The scrolls from Bengal and Orissa illustrate local versions of episodes culled from Hindu mythology as well as contemporary narratives; those from Rajasthan depict the exploits of local heroes like Pabuji and Dev Narayan; those from Gujarat portray Jaina themes apart from narrating incidents from the Epics and the Puranas; and the *yama patas* from Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu illustrate the journey to heaven and punishments to sinners in hell. The scrolls from Telangana in Andhra Pradesh narrate legends about the origins of particular castes and the deeds of its legendary heroes.

Santhal *jadu patas*, Rajasthani *kaavad* and the Garoda Picture Scrolls of Gujarat are distinctly remarkable traditions in this narrative genre. Today, there are traditional artists who absorb new materials and techniques and respond to new media incorporating socio-political events and imagery into their art practice.

The art forms chosen for this event, in their diverse manifestations, represent the larger picture of the cultural landscape of India denoting rituals, epics, legends and ballads, and contemporary narratives. Masks, Puppets and Picture Showmen are living traditions in many parts of the country with a formidable variety of vibrant expressions. By bringing these together, IGNCA is making an effort not only to showcase the rich diversity of masks, puppets and picture scrolls in the larger matrix of storytelling traditions in India but also to project the artistic significance of each form.

Notes and References

[i] Jonathan Goldbergelle, *The Performance Poetics of Tolubommalata: A South Asian Shadow Puppet Tradition* (Ph.D dissertation: University of Wisconsin–Madison, 1984).

[ii] Richard Schehner, *Performace Studies: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p.171.

[iii] Suresh Awasthi, *Performance Tradition in India* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 2001), p.16.

[iv] For a discussion on this, see B.M Pande, "Archaeology of Masks: Indian Evidence" in S.C Malik (ed.), *Man, Mind and Mask* (New Delhi: IGNCA & Aryan Books International, 2001), p.119.

[v] John Emigh, Masked Performance: *The Play of Self and Other in Ritual and Theatre* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), p.46.

[vi] For an analysis of miming and masking in 'Jagaran' theatre organization in the slums of Delhi, see Sreekala Sivasankaran, *Spectacle and Social Change: Anthropology of Theatre in the Urban context of Delhi*, Monograph, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, 2007.

[vii] See Usha Malik, "Puppetry in India", *Putul Yatra: An Exhibition of Indian Puppets* (New Delhi: Sangeet Natak akademi, 2003), p.6.

[viii] Dadi Pudumjee's Ishara puppet theatre has developed a repertoire of modern theatrical ensemble comprising puppetry, world music, poetry and dance.

[ix] Jyotindra Jain, "Introduction", *Picture Showmen: Insights into the Narrative Tradition in Indian Art* (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 1998), p.8.

[x] Ibid.

Akhyan: The Exhibition

Dadi Pudumjee and Neeraj Sahai

While all answers to the manifold queries are not to be found in museums,
across the vistas of time one glimpses a variety of materials, processes, embellishments, woven into a common fabric.
This is what I feel constitutes a tradition.
Though some of this may fade and decay, a vital part of it lives and constitutes what may be termed the spirit or soul of a people.
It is the sustenance from which are born the myriad creative forms on which posterity grows, thrives and burgeons into ever-new revitalized generations.
It is this essence that constitutes real museums...
Every item worthy to be displayed has to be alive, vital.

Museums must now serve the general public,
Lay open the almost endless landscapes of the entire globe
As also reflect the close intimate elements that constitute our daily life
And thus become an indispensable part of popular education.

And so museums, naturally, enable people to understand life.

Kamladevi Chattopadhyay (1903-1988)
(Address at the inauguration of the tenth assembly of World crafts Councils, New Delhi 1986)

Akhyan is an effort to celebrate the spirit and the soul of the narrative traditions through Puppets, Masks & Picture Showmen traditions of India. More than a decade ago (1998), we had collaborated to put together an exhibition of masks from the archives of Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) called *Man and Mask/ Rupa Pratirupa*. Again in 2002, we worked together for *Putul Yatra* an exhibition of Indian puppets from the collection of Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA). This year, when the idea to co-curate an exhibition of Masks, Puppets & Picture Showmen Traditions of India was proposed by IGNCA, it seemed like a natural progression to exhibit both the collections, and include a third form of storytelling, that is Picture Showmen Traditions (from the private collection of Prof. Jyotindra Jain, IGNCA & other individuals).

After close discussions and meetings with Prof. Molly Kaushal, the concept to link all the three forms for exhibition presentation was developed. For easy viewing each of the three forms have been divided into four sections each ~ *The Epics*, *The Sacred & The Rituals*, *Romances & Ballads* and *The Modern.*

In all the three forms ~ the Mask, the Puppet or the Picture Scroll ~ the interaction of man with the inanimate object helps in creating a world, with its own set of logic and pattern. The performer becomes one with the object, such that it is very difficult for the audience to isolate one (performer) from the other (object) elevating the audience to a new reality created by this interaction. This, it would seem more in the case of mask performance, in which the face of the performer is completely concealed from the audience, and also in most of the puppet performances, where the puppeteer stays hidden behind a screen and the puppet occupies the centre stage. In both these cases, man takes a step back to create a surreal world. In the third case, we see a different equation, where both the scrolls and man take centre stage equally. Here the magic is created by the narrator's voice as he guides the audience to look deeper into the individual pictures, guiding them through to the simple line drawings, into a three-dimensional story plane inside their mind. All the three forms are reflections of the theatre of humankind. Each embodies the soul of its creator, the performer and the artisan.

India is indeed very blessed to have within its traditions such different techniques of Puppetry (glove, string, rod and shadow), Masks (both ritualistic and theatrical) and the varied traditions of scrolls (paper, cloth, wood, leaves, barks etc.)

Akhyan attempts to present some of these living traditions of storytelling not just as museum pieces, but as a portrayal of the rich cultural performing arts and crafts of India ~ the exquisitely carved wood, costumes, jewellery, painting and the techniques of manipulation & presentation which have survived many centuries ~ highlighting the Indian tradition, where the object is given life and projects its creator's ideas and essence, through narration of stories of gods and demons, heroes and common people, of love and affection, and beyond.

In the last 50 years, there is a new generation of urban performers, who do not necessarily come from traditional communities of performers; their themes and techniques reflect their surroundings in as much as the traditional artists do. These young puppeteers work with various techniques and media, incorporating influences from both the East and the West, creating a hybrid modern Indian style.

(Dadi D Pudumjee & Neeraj Sahai are the Co- curators for the Mask and Puppet section of Akhyan)

figure 1

The Art of Indian Picture Showmen: Tradition and Transformation

Jyotindra Jain

If some illustrations of a text are extreme reductions of a complex narrative – a mere emblem of the story, others enlarge the text, adding details, figures, and a setting not given in the written source. The style as a distinctive habitual system of artistic forms is an expressive vehicle and can modify the often scantily literal sense in the very process of translating the text into an image.

– Meyer Shapiro[1]

Tulasidasa, the celebrated sixteenth-century author of *Ramacharitamanasa,* while elaborating on the perplexity felt by a female companion of Sita in verbally describing the beauty of Rama, of which she had merely caught a glimpse, makes her utter: "*Gira anayana, nayana bin bani*" ["The speech does not have (the faculty of) vision and the vision is bereft of speech"]. This brief statement in a way gives an insight into the conceptual difference that may exist between the verbal and visual narratives. Though in all cultures verbal (textual or oral) narrative can exist independently of the visual (pictorial) narrative, the art of the "picture showman"[2] endeavours to complement the word with the visual image and vice versa. In many cases, the composite narrative of the word and the painted image is amplified by the performance – facial and bodily gestures and postures, singing with or without the accompaniment of musical instruments, dance, theatrical rendering of scenes, and even audience participation.

Indian traditions of storytelling, often accompanied by painted panels or scrolls, can be traced back through literary evidence to at least the second century BC and are known to have existed almost all over the subcontinent. Buddhist, Brahmanical, and Jaina literature contains abundant references to the art of painted scrolls (*pata chitras)* which were exhibited in ancient times to educate and entertain the people. Classical Sanskrit literature has several references to *yama patas.*

Narrative scroll paintings are still produced in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Bengal, and Bihar, and a few Deccani scroll paintings are known as well.

Some of the oldest and the most interesting references to picture showmen are contained in early Jaina literature. *Bhagavati Sutra,* a canonical text (circa 3rd century AD) refers to the life of Mankhali Gosala, the greatest of the Ajivika teachers.[3] There it is said that Mankhali Gosala was the son of a *mankha* (picture showman) named Mankhali. Abhayadeva (circa eleventh century), commenting upon the word *mankha* in the *Bhagavati Sutra,* says that it refers to a special type of mendicant "whose hands were occupied with a picture board".[4] *Aupapatika Sutra* (circa 3rd to 5th century AD) also mentions a *mankha* along with other performers. In its description of the Purnabhadra Chaitya, the *Aupapatika Sutra* states that the shrine was always visited by dancers, actors, rope-dancers, wrestlers, jumpers, mimes, storytellers, *rasa* dancers, fortune-tellers, acrobats, picture storytellers *(mankha),* instrumentalists, attendants, and bards *(magaha).*[5] Hemachandra, in his *Abhidhana Chintamani,*[6] explains the word *mankha* as *magaha* or bard, but it is interesting to note that the above reference in the *Aupapatika Sutra* mentions both *mankha* and *magaha* and, therefore, these were perhaps two different kinds of performers.

In Buddhist literature there are references to *charana chitta* or mobile painting. The commentary on *Samyutta-Nikaya*[7] mentions *charanam nama chittan* and explains it as: "There are Brahman heretics who, having prepared a canvas booth *(pata kotthaka)* and painting *(lekhapitva)* therein presentations of all kinds of happiness and misery connected with existence in heavens or hell, take this picture and travel about *(vicharanti),* pointing out: 'If you do this you will get this'...."[8] It is clear that *charana chitta* was a mobile painting or a painted booth having illustrations of punishments in hell.

According to Ananda Coomaraswamy *charana chitta* was the Buddhist equivalent of the better known term *yama pata.*[9] He believes that the *Lakkhana Sutra*, which deals with karma and punishments, and *Devaduta Sutra* (Dulva text), which is actually a description of the kingdom of Yama, the god of death, were illustrated on the picture boards and picture booths of the itinerant storytellers.[10]

Kuvalayamala[11] (circa eighth century), a Jaina text, refers to a wandering teacher *(upadhyaya)* who showed a Jaina monk a painted panel of *samsarachakra,* the cycle of the universe, which contained depictions of the pains and pleasures of the human world, the heavenly regions, the involvement with various karmas and the different punishments in hell.

Comparable to the reference to *samsarachakra chitra pata* are the descriptions of the *yama patas* of classical Sanskrit literature. In Vishakhadatta's *Mudrarakshasa,* there is a reference to a spy who disguised himself as a *yama pattika* (picture showman) and carried along with him the painted scrolls of punishments in hell. He would habitually enter the houses of his patrons, where he would display his *yama*-cloth and sing songs, presumably of a religious type.[12] Bana's *Harsha-charitam*[13] also mentions the *yama pattika* and explains that they showed pictures and gave sermons on vice and virtue, reward and punishment.

In *Vaddaradhane*[14], a tenth-century Kannada collection of stories from a Jaina classic, there is an interesting reference to a picture showman performing in the

figure 2

figure 3

marketplace of a town. The story of Sukumarasvami, in this collection, contains the description of a Brahmin minister and his daughter who, in order to perform the ritual of fulfillment of the latter's vows, are going to a Jaina monk. On the way they see a man being taken to the gallows by the king's guards. It is revealed upon enquiry that the person accused is a picture showman whose accomplices steal paddy from the bags of paddy merchants while they are kept engrossed in the picture performance by the picture showmen.

Tarikh-i-Feroz Shahi mentions an interesting incident of how a Brahmin who was in possession of a wooden tablet *(muhrak)* covered within and without with paintings of "demons" and other objects was burnt alive on the orders of Sultan Feroz Shah. It says that as the Brahmin refused to be converted to Islam he was "tied (in) hand and foot and cast into (a pile of faggots); the (painted) tablet was thrown on top and the pile was lighted... the tablet of the Brahmin was lighted in two places, at his head and at his feet...."[15]

From all these references in literature dating from the third century, it is evident that the tradition of wandering teachers-cum-picture storytellers was widely popular in ancient times. Even today there are wandering picture storytellers who carry painted scrolls showing the punishments of hell as well as popular religious stories. We already know about the tradition of the Chitrakathi paintings of Maharashtra[16] and the related performance of narrative singing; the Rajasthani "reading" of the painted *phad* of Pabuji (figures 1 to 3) and the other heroes to the accompaniment of music and dance; and the *jadu patua* 'magic scroll narrators' of Bengal and Bihar .

Both Vishakhadatta and Bana mention a type of picture showman known as *yama pattika* which literally means the "carrier of Yama-board", and refers to people who conventionally earned their livelihood by exhibiting painted panels of punishments rendered in hell (figure 9). It is interesting that even today in Bengal one finds narrative scroll paintings of storytellers with depictions of scenes from hell known as *jam pot*, which is clearly the vernacularization of the Sanskrit *yama pata.* The Garoda tradition of Gujarat too has at least three panels dealing with Yama and the rewards and punishments of heaven and hell. This is one of the most striking examples of the continuity of an ancient Indian cultural feature in contemporary times.

figure 9

Beliefs, practices, and terminologies associated with the ritual context of some of the painted panels and scrolls of storytellers, reveal that these not only serve as visual aids to stories narrated but have the status of a sacred object or shrine as well. The custom of consecration of sacred images, shrines or paintings has been common among the Hindus and the Jainas as well as among some of the tribal communities of India. The *Shilpashastras,* the Hindu canons of art, iconography, and architecture, contain elaborate prescriptions for the consecration of shrines and images. It is interesting to note that the tribal Rathwas of central-eastern Gujarat and the Bhilalas of western Madhya Pradesh make elaborate narrative paintings based on their myth of creation on the walls of their huts and consecrate them by a ceremony of spirit invocation wherein some of the characters of the painted myth are invoked to descend into the wall and reside there till the paintings last.[17] The *badvo* or 'chief ritual practitioner' gets possessed by a deity and narrates, image by image, the painted myth, pointing out at the same time the errors, if any, committed by the painters. The painted walls, thus consecrated, become living shrines.

Narrative scrolls of storytellers' paintings related to the legends of the deified folk hero Pabuji and the neo-Vaishnava incarnation Dev Narayan are reportedly treated as the shrines of these deities. After the scroll paintings are completed, they are ritually consecrated by a ceremony of invocation of deities and when the scrolls are to be discarded, for any reason, the deities present in the scrolls are invoked and requested to leave them by a ritual of deconsecration as described a little later in this introduction. A similar custom was commonly observed also in the Telangana region, where old and tattered scrolls that could not be used any more were ritually cremated and immersed in a river, like a dead body.

Significantly, the Garoda picture showmen (see figure 5)of Gujarat refer to their ambulatory scroll-reading tours as *jatra (yatra)* or 'pilgrimage'. In the popular sense, the word *yatra* means 'a visit to a place of pilgrimage'. Another form of *yatra* is *rathayatra* or 'ambulating of the *ratha* or chariot' (which carries the sacred image and is a form of mobile shrine). The Garodas treat their picture scroll as a mobile temple (its topmost portion being painted in the form of a *shikhara* or temple spire) and therefore designate their scroll-reading tours as *yatra.*

From these few examples it would become amply clear that the act of narrating paintings as well as that of listening and watching the performance (participation by the audience) bear a strong ritual significance.

figure 5

Narrative Pictorial Devices in the Storytellers' Paintings

The form, shape, and size of the painted panels and scrolls and intended type and extent of the pictorial narration are intrinsically interconnected and as such are important determinants of the pictorial schema of these paintings.

Most of the Bengal *pats* of the *patuas,* the Santhal *jadu patua* scrolls, and all the Telangana (Andhra) scrolls contain a single story in which the episodes are sequentially arranged in a linear fashion for a linear narrative, leading to a climactic scene, either where the scroll ends or which is then followed by a couple of didactic panels, usually of punishments in hell, or deification of the main character (for instance, the Manasa scrolls of the *patuas),* or creation of a particular caste or caste hero (as in the Bhavana Rishi scrolls of Andhra Pradesh). In single-story scrolls, comparatively more pictorial space is available to the artist to recreate, elaborate or improvise upon the oral narrative and translate it into a series of pictures, as can be seen in the Murshidabad *pats.*

figure 6

figure 7

In contrast, the Garoda storytellers of Gujarat used a narrow vertical scroll having nineteen compartments, of which the last three had scenes of reward and punishment in heaven and hell, whereas the rest were related either to deities such as Lakshmi, Ganesha, and Shiva or to selected episodes from the Ramayana or the local legends of Gujarat (figures 6 & 7). In these scrolls only one panel was devoted to each legend or episode and therefore the painter had to compress important events into a limited space, usually by employing continuous narrative, or had to choose only the climactic episode (often a tear-jerker) for depiction. The narrator usually resorted to oral narrative of the concerned legend till he reached the climactic episode (which was pictorially illustrated in the scroll) and on reaching this point he usually got up to collect alms from the audience which was by then spellbound and emotionally charged enough to donate charitably. Each panel of these scrolls is highly abridged — an "extreme reduction of a complex narrative".

The Chitrakathis of Maharashtra (figure 10) did not use a running scroll in which the narrative sequence was so rigidly predetermined. Here, the entire story, or its selected episodes, was divided into several pictorial situations and then each such situation would be depicted on a handy rectangular panel, as illustrated in the article by Anna Dallapiccola (1980).

The narrator followed the general storyline and strung these panels, one after the other, in the running thread of the narrative. According to a performer[18], "If one or two pictures were missing here and there, it did not matter; the narrator still verbally pursued the storyline, and continued the picture show." In this situation the painter and the narrator were not so rigidly bound by the linear sequence of episodes as long as they were broadly pursuing the plot of the legend. The narrator also had the facility to re-use the same picture in another context if the narrative so required — a possibility not available to the narrator of running scrolls mentioned above.[19]

The most elaborate and complex structure of pictorial devices ever utilized for a storyteller's painting is to be found in the large Rajasthani scrolls dedicated to the legends of Pabuji and Dev Narayan, and as such would deserve a reference here.[20] It may be clarified that what

figure 10

is presented is only a brief account of these traditions and may by no means be treated as detailed or complete. Since the present volume does not include a full-fledged article on these traditions, they are described here at some length.

The life stories of Pabuji, a deified folk hero, and that of Dev Narayan, a neo-Vaishnava incarnation, are even today painted on cloth by painters of the Joshi clan living in such areas as Shahpura, Bhilwara, Chittorgarh, and Udaipur in Rajasthan, for their *bhopa* clients who are priests-cum-narrator-singer/musicians of these deities. The *bhopas* commission these elaborately painted panels, consecrate them on their acquisition, treat them as living shrines, and hold performances in front of audiences of devotees, in which a part of the legend of these deities is related in prose and verse by them and their helpers with the accompaniment of musical instruments and choreographic movements. When such a scroll has outlived its life or has proved to be inauspicious, the *bhopa* and the painter are said to take it to Pushkar Lake on an auspicious day, invoke the main deity by ritual offerings combined with recitation of sacred stanzas and request him to leave the scroll-shrine, which when so deserted by the spirits, can be immersed in the lake in the same fashion as the charred bones of a dead person (figure 4).

The cloth panels of Pabuji (approximately 1.5 by 5 to 8 metres) and those of Dev Narayan, of about the same dimensions, are traditionally painted in earth and mineral colours. The complete legend of Pabuji is pictorially conceptualized in approximately sixty episodes (see figures 1 and 2). Briefly, Pabuji who belonged to the Rathor clan of Rajputs, was incarnated somewhere in the fourteenth century in Kolumund. It is said that he was born of a union between his father Dhandhal, a ruler of the clan and an *apsara*, 'a nymph' who from time to time converted herself into a tigress or lioness and as such breast-fed the infant Pabuji. After the death of Pabuji's parents, his stepbrother Budoji came to the throne and his stepsister Premalde was married to Khichi. When Pabuji attained adulthood, he was gifted the divine mare Kesar Kalmi by Dewal, a Charan woman, on the promise that he would always protect her. For many years Pabuji remained occupied in battles against Baghels, Sumras, Dodas, and others. He married a Sodha Rajput princess but soon after his marriage received news that Khichi had attacked the cows of his protégée Dewal who had gifted him the divine mare. He fought with Khichi and then forgave him after restoring the cows to Dewal. Subsequently, Pabuji died in battle and attained divine status.[21]

Dev Narayan, a neo-Hindu incarnation of Vishnu, is one of the most popular deities of the Gujar community. He was born to Sadhu Mata, the wife of Sawai Bhoj, who was the eldest of the twenty-four brothers of the Bagrawat clan. According to legend, a young widow Leela Sevdi saw a man called Hariram Rawat carrying a lion's head in his hands. Through this vision, she bore a lion-headed child called Bagh Rawat. He married twelve women who gave birth to the twenty-four Bagrawat brothers. Once in a drinking spree, the Bagrawats poured a large amount of drink on the ground, which reached the netherworld, offending the serpent Basag who complained to Vishnu about this. Vishnu descended on earth to destroy Sawai Bhoj. Sawai Bhoj's wife Sadhu, who was then preparing for a bath, came out to venerate Vishnu in her nudity. Vishnu was so pleased with her reverence that he promised to be incarnated as her son. Many battles were fought between the Bagrawats and their adversaries. Subsequently, a divine stream of water issued from the rocks of the Malasari hills and Dev Narayan appeared in a lotus floating in the stream.

The legends of Pabuji and Dev Narayan assume epic proportions by involving the life stories of several generations of families and extended families of the important characters and the saga of innumerable battles fought, won and lost. The pictorialization of these epics is on a grand scale involving complex schematic strategies.

In linear sequencing, as in Bengal or Telangana scrolls, the episodes of a story are organized in chronological order, one closely following the other. In the case of the Pabuji and Dev Narayan panels, the chronological sequencing is not followed by the artist in the process of painting or in the placement of episodes. Single or a few episodes are scattered all over the panel (the basis of this schema is discussed below) but as the *bhopa* and his partners narrate the story, they resort to chronological sequencing and while doing so point at the relevant painted episode at the definite moment when a reference to it becomes imminent in the oral narrative. Often two sequentially interconnected painted episodes are at quite a distance from one another. As the narrator-performer endeavours to interconnect and weave these scattered illustrations into his narrative, he has to make his way dancing from one point to another and thus in that duration he gets an opportunity to improvise his song and music. In other words, the pictorial schema of these panels is so designed that it allows scope for a composite performance of oral narration in prose and verse as well as dance and music. An oral narrative cannot but follow a temporally organized sequence wherein episodes can be narrated only in a linear fashion, one after the other. But in the case of Pabuji and Dev Narayan scrolls the sequencing of the temporal narrative and that of the pictorial does not dovetail in a linear fashion. As in true epics, the oral and painted versions of the Pabuji and Dev Narayan legends incorporate in them many temporalities and spatialities which keep converging into and diverging from each other. The painter, as he pictorializes the legends, broadly works from left to right in rhythmic progression comparable to that of a scrolling creeper moving in a definite direction while its offshoots zigzag here and there. As he paints, his greatest concern is to make sure that each episode is placed in its right spatial context — a schema conventionally known to the *bhopa* and which serves as the basis of (the *bhopa's)* sequencing of episodes, in terms of both oral and pictorial narrative. To attain this, the painter continuously earmarks spaces, by means of rough sketching, to accommodate each definite character and the details of each episode. Then he proceeds to

figure 4

finalize the drawing and fill up the colours. Handling cluster after cluster in this manner, the painter completes the entire scroll.

An analysis of the distribution of painted episodes in these scrolls reveals an interesting pattern. If one were to imagine dividing the horizontal scroll into four approximately equal divisions, it would become apparent that the episodes related to the hero's personal life, his paternal and maternal homes, his in-laws' town, his relatives and friends, his enemy's attack on his land and so on would be shown in the first and second divisions on the left. The hero's place of birth, palaces, stables, court, royal paraphernalia, harems, and parks and gardens would occupy the second and third divisions from the left. The fourth division would be primarily reserved for the enemy camp — the hero's attack on the enemy, the enemy's palaces, stables, harems, gardens, etc.[22] Though this may be the broad pictorial scheme, one may not find watertight compartments here. Shrilal Joshi, the scroll painter of Bhilwara has, time and again, drawn the attention of scholars to a certain correspondence that may exist between the placement of some kingdoms referred to in the legends and shown in the scrolls, and the actual geographical location of those places.[23]

It is remarkable how a whole chain of episodes that takes place in a large region comprising territories of allies and enemies is, at one level, compacted in the pictorial space of the scroll — a kind of "reductive imagery", and at another level the same episodes are immensely amplified to make them appear much more magnificent than life — an outcome of the rich use of hyperbole and metaphor which is the true language of epics and legends.

In the present context it would also be important to bring into focus some of the peculiar features of the pictorial narrative vocabulary created by the artists of various narrative scrolls. In addition to using ornate borders, creepers, trees, rivers and buildings as scene dividers, they frequently make use of positions and postures of human figures to divide a scene. In such cases, the figure on the left is shown in profile, looking to the right and the figure on the right, again in profile, looks to the left. In this arrangement the bordering figures of the consecutive scenes are set back to back. These compositional devices make each scene appear self-contained and at the same time dramatically intensify the involvement of characters, giving them the sense of participation and action so necessary in narrative painting.

In the context of scene dividers another narrative device of "opening windows" as used by the Garoda storytellers of Gujarat must be mentioned. In the pictorialization of the stories of Harishchandra and Taramati, Shravana and his blind parents, and in the depiction of hell, the artist places chosen episodes in square or rectangular frames within the broad panel devoted to the concerned story — as if opening windows on certain selected scenes — thereby creating space within space.

One ancient and universally employed narrative technique comprises reusing the same picture to illustrate different subjects. In old printed Bibles it often happened that the picture of Jacob's birth was repeated for the birth of Joseph and other scriptural figures and a battle scene was serviceable for illustrating several such encounters.[24] This device is commonly used in the narration of Rajasthani scrolls. For example, the scene of Nevaji (brother of Sawai Bhoj) playing *chaupar* (a dice game) with his sister-in-law and listening to her arguments against her husband marrying Jaimati is repeated for the episode of solemnization of the marriage between Sawai Bhoj and Jaimati, and later on the same scene is used when Jaimati approaches Sawai Bhoj to inform him about his brothers having been killed. Similarly, the scene of Naulakha Bag where the twenty-four Bagrawat brothers were on a drinking spree is subsequently repeated for the one in which the Bagrawat brothers go to abduct Jaimati. The scene of Sawai Bhoj's brother Nevaji frequenting the ritual fire of Rupnath between all his battles to magically heal his wounds, is made to serve also as the illustration for Nevaji's wife Netu visiting Rupnath to hand over her baby to him before becoming sati. Several such examples show that this technique was highly popular among the scroll painters and narrators of Rajasthan.

While dealing with the variety of narrative devices used by the painters of the storytellers' scrolls, it would be important to recognize two models of spatial presentation: (a) in which the perspectivization occurs through the consciousness of the participant characters and (b) where it occurs through that of the viewer. Occasionally the two are combined. Though most episodes in the storytellers' paintings seem to follow the first model there are occasional examples of a combination of the two models. Let us take, for instance, the episode of Indrajit, Ravana's son, as depicted in Paithan painting, who in his invisible form shoots innumerable arrows at Rama's army. Here the situation is such that in the lower half of the painting Rama's army is shown fighting, where the first type of perspectivization occurs. But in the upper half of the painting Indrajit, half-emerging from the cloud, is

shown shooting arrows — being invisible to Rama's army he is depicted only from the onlooker's viewpoint. Here the characters of the lower half of the panel are not aware of the presence of that of the upper half but the onlooker is able to see both situations at one visual level. The same situation occurs again in Paithan painting in the depiction of Hanuman in a tree, dropping Rama's ring into Sita's lap — Sita is unaware of Hanuman's presence in Ashoka Vatika but the viewer is able to see the complete scene. In the Garoda scrolls of Gujarat when Dasharatha shoots an arrow in the direction of a well where Shravana is drawing water (Dasharatha mistaking him for an animal), the two participants are oblivious of each other's presence but the onlooker is able to see both of them simultaneously.[25]

Related to the two mentioned models of perspectivization are the respective situations of the profile and the frontal. The profile face is detached from the viewer and belongs to the body in action in a space shared with other profiles.[26] In most storytellers' paintings this profile-facing-profile situation is employed but when the images of deities are to be shown (as in the scrolls of Pabuji or Dev Narayan, in Garoda scrolls or in Bengal scrolls) usually the frontal posture is chosen because the deities are supposed to be giving *darshan* to the devotees (the audience) who are outside the painting — in front of them, face-to-face, and not as participant characters of the story.

Many of these pictorial devices combined with the more familiar ones of continuous narrative, multiple vantage points, or typecasting of certain characters are often used simultaneously in a single genre, providing it with a kind of narrative rhythm rather than using them as diverse elements.

Negotiating Contemporaneity

The second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th coincide with Bengal's "age of mechanical reproduction" and its immediate aftermath: woodcuts, lithography, oleography, printing, photography and cinema. For the first time the common man had access to a range of images through printed pictures of gods, goddesses and renowned personalities of the time through postcards, calendars and product labels; through photographs, newspapers, and textbooks. Grappling with this mass proliferation of reproduced imagery with its reduced or enlarged scales and proportions, realistic but frozen gestures and postures, and severely edited and fragmented figures, the first-generation audiences of the age of mechanical replication had to decipher the new "pictorial" script, eventually to be able to "read" it and communicate through it. Bengal's response to this new vocabulary was twofold - on the one hand resisting the change often with sarcastic ridicule and on the other adopting many of its features in professional practice, even using it as a tool for more effective expression and a wider outreach. While savouring the transition, the urban middle-class and rural Bengal were developing a taste for the new visual culture. The bazaar painters of Kalighat, the rural *patua* scroll painters and storytellers and the village women embroiderers of the *kantha* quilts imbibed and appropriated these changes in the pictorial conceptualization of their images. In this context I examine how the rural storytellers, scroll painters and embroiderers confronted the media and the media-based imagery, how they saw in the process of transformation the essence of expression and how as image makers they recalibrated their pictorial language after their exposure to the replicated pictures proliferating at that time.

For them the transition from their inherited tradition to absorption of new elements - both in terms of materials and techniques as well as exploration of new possibilities of expression - was smooth and natural. When in most parts of rural India comparatively closed and repetitive artistic conventions had brought about a certain degree of stagnancy and decadence in pictorial expression, for historical reasons in Bengal, by and large, there was more openness about the adoption and the articulation of a new media-based imagery. For the folk artists the absorption of modernity did not mean degeneration of tradition but its consolidation.

Let me take a few examples to illustrate how the rural Bengali artists responded to the new media and appropriated contemporary social events and imagery, side by side with their conventional art practice.

A Narrative Scroll from Medinipur- "After Independence"

This mid-20th century scroll titled "After Independence" depicts, with a tinge of sarcasm, the family tensions, social conflicts and agony that arose from the breakdown of existing moral values and economic structures, the effect of modernization around the time of India's independence. The scroll is a response to the so-called degenerative effect of cinema on the youth of the time (figure 11). The opening scene of the narrative depicts a young girl crying in the kitchen over her unfortunate economic circumstances, she does not have new clothes to wear. Below her is a queue of people waiting with ration cards to obtain their quota of rice. In

figure 11

contrast, young men and women wearing new and fancy clothes and shoes are shown going to a cinema hall. The next three panels are devoted to portraying people going to the cinema in motorcars, cycle rickshaws and bullock carts. The old and the physically handicapped too are shown rushing to see a movie. The "bad" impact of cinema is represented by images of "modern" men and women standing in queue at a court with their applications for a court marriage, as a judge drives up to the court in a car. In one panel a newly married "modern" couple is shown approaching their illiterate and uneducated parents and addressing them in English "Hallo dear", etc. The climactic scene shows the father-in-law falling at the daughter-in-law's feet sarcastically addressing her as "Mother Chandi", the destroyer of demons. (These interpretations are based on the narrative songs of the *patua.)*

The scroll is in line with the Bengali *patua* tradition of responding in their art to contemporary social and religious scandals, satirizing politicians, the *bhadralok* class, the *ejuraj* (educated rajas), babus and fashionable dandies, as also profusely depicted in Kalighat painting.

It is an interesting phenomenon that when folk artists of India, even today, are busy mechanically churning out the umpteenth version of their past artistic conventions, their counterparts in the late 19th and early 20th century Bengal had begun to respond to the contemporary social and political conflicts as well as family tensions in their works.

"Indira Gandhi Murder" - Another Scroll from Medinipur

Mythologizing reality, turning it into a fable or an allegory comes easily to the *patuas* of Bengal. Whether they pictorialize the mythological stories of Rama, Krishna or the goddess Durga or incidents from real life such as Elokeshi's murder (a scandalous event of 1873 in which Nabin Banerjee killed his wife Elokeshi for allegedly being involved in an adulterous relationship with a temple priest) or *narir hate driver khun* ("driver murdered by a woman", an incident of a newlywed woman stabbing a bus driver who attempted to rob her of her gold ornaments), they equally work with "reductive imagery" - two pillars indicating a building, a tree signifying a landscape, etc. This technique effectively transforms the locale from real to fictitious, from material to symbolic. *Patuas* were used to portraying divine personages such as Rama, Lakshmana, Sita or Durga in the image of ordinary people - Rama would be shown as a member of the *bhadralok* of Calcutta, wearing Mughal court costumes, and his palace would be one of the Victorian buildings of the city. Sita or Durga would be no different from middle-class Bengali brides. On the other hand, while narrativizing contemporary events from real life which reach them through the media, the *patuas* fall back upon the pre-existing model of depiction of mythological characters and locales and thereby transcend reality. The day-to-day images of contemporary life - cinema houses, cars and buses, palatial mansions of Calcutta, helicopters and aircrafts - are images from another world which come to *patuas* through the media: newspapers, photographs, cinema and so on. They come to them already sensationalized, fantasized and therefore mythologized. As they use a mythological locale and the iconography of Hindu deities to depict contemporary scandals, they once again mythologize "reality". The painted contemporary images thereby undergo an immediate metamorphosis to become legends. This essentially formal pictorial device of easy transformations mastered by the *patuas* also facilitated the conversion of national heroes into deities, a process that has gained popularity in the last fifteen years, especially with the wider outreach of the media in rural Bengal.

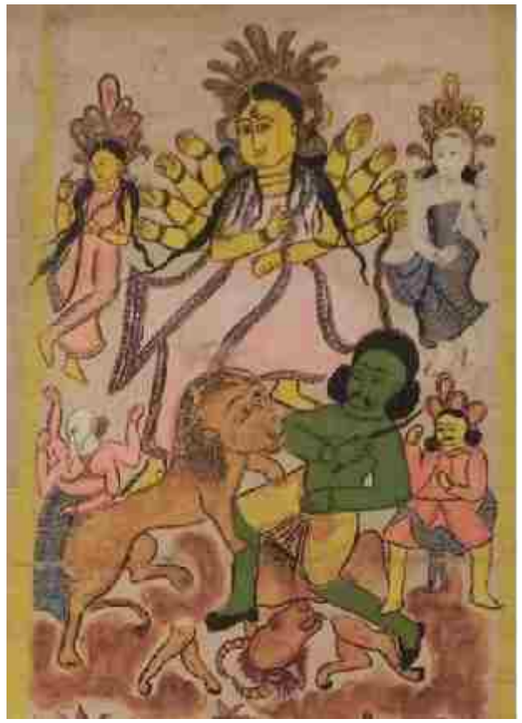

figure 8

Against this background let us examine a *patua's* scroll depicting the murder of Indira Gandhi. It was painted in 1989 by Bahar Chitrakar of Noya village in Medinipur district.

Just as any conventional scroll devoted to the goddess Sarasvati, Kali, Durga or Manasa (see figure 8) would start with a representation of the respective goddess invoked at the beginning of its narration, this scroll starts with a photographic portrait of Indira Gandhi taken from an election poster. As Sarasvati would be depicted with the *vina*, her attribute, Indira Gandhi is shown with a microphone in front of her. The conventional representation of any of the goddesses in the opening panel would be in the form of a cultic image - frontal and facing the devotee. This cultic image for worship would be in sharp contrast to the rest of the scenes depicting the goddess in action in various participatory episodes. As the *patua* seeks to iconize Indira Gandhi and literally give her the position accorded to a deity in the scroll, he needs to find a device by which the icon can be marked off from her mortal life. The *patua* attains this crucial differentiation by using for her deified representation a photographic portrait placed in a frame within a frame, while in narrativizing her mortal life he paints various episodes with watercolour and brush. As the *patua* opens the scroll, he first displays the photographic portrait and invokes the "goddess" through laudatory verses and then proceeds to narrate the episodes: Indira Gandhi seated in her office in Delhi, flanked by her guards, a bus from Medinipur heading for Calcutta carrying villagers to her rally; two guards saluting her as she steps out; guards shooting her; Sonia Gandhi with the wounded Indira Gandhi (figure 12), Rajiv Gandhi addressing an election meeting in Medinipur; Indira Gandhi brought to hospital; Rajiv Gandhi piloting a "special helicopter" to Delhi; Indira Gandhi's body lying in state for public homage, a Delhi jail where the guards are imprisoned; Indira Gandhi's body being brought to the crematorium accompanied by a helicopter overhead; her ashes being scattered over the Himalaya from an aircraft.

The choice of episodes and the moulding of characters by the *patua* are in line with the news and images broadcast to the nation by the media at the time of Indira Gandhi's death - both retain an equilibrium between myth and modernity. The images, as they appear in the scroll, create in the minds of the *patua's* audience an imaginary faraway setting, as remote as the "land" of Rama or Durga.

Here, ironically the present, the modern and the real is translated into the past, the distant and the mythic by conversion of images into metaphors. This attribute of the language of the *patua's* art provides him with the facility to imbibe modern media-based images and enrich his orbit of expression. Indeed he was aware of the magical properties of the artist's power of attaining transformations - of one image into another, of time present into time past, of space profane into space sacred, and vice versa.

Today the *patua* painters of Bengal create narrative scrolls based on catastrophic events of the contemporary world, such as 9/11 (figure 13) or the 2004 tsunami (figure 14), often deriving quotes not

figure 12

figure 13

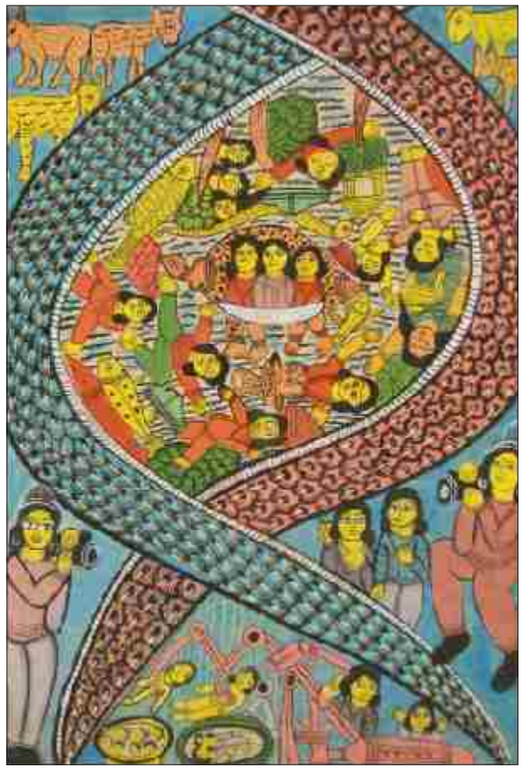

figure 14

inherited traditional themes for a souvenir market and interior decoration or to reflect upon their contemporary social and political situation and articulate these in their work. The work of the latter category is definitely more innovative, vigorous and lively.

figure 15

only from the contemporary image world around them, but also from the works of other *patuas*, which has started to become a shared tradition over time. The quotes move freely across contexts, building up a freer and wider language of intervisuality.

On account of the issues of land rights, land grabbing by absentee landlords, control of natural resources by outside manipulators and exploitation by moneylenders, several tribal and peasant communities have suffered immense injustices. In some of the Santal scrolls depicting their myths of creation (figure 15) one finds reference to such insurrectionary encounters with modes of control and governance. For example, in one of these scrolls one finds, Yama, the god of death depicted as a uniformed policeman with bullet belt. In another scroll Shiva is shown moving around escorted by policemen carrying rifles (see figure 16 in the inner title page). Non conventional themes such as the life of Khudiram Bose have become a part of the Santal scroll tradition.

The choice for the folk and tribal artists is between mass-producing, repetitive and lifeless replicas of their

Notes

1 Shapiro, Meyer. 1973. *Words and Pictures: On the Literal and the Symbolic in the Illustration of a Text*. The Hague, p. 12.

2. The term was first used by A.K. Coomaraswamy in an article entitled "Picture Showmen", published in *Indian Historical Quarterly,* V, 2 (June 1929). Though it is understood that such a term could have its own limitations and problems, it is used here once again as it is familiar to scholars.

3. *Bhagavati Sutra,* with commentary by Abhayadeva, 3 vols. 1918-21. Bombay, XV, *sutra* 540, folio 659f.

4. Basham, A.L. 1951. *History and Doctrine of the Ajivikas, a Vanished Indian Religion.* London, p. 35.

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18. Parshuram Vishram from Pingulirana, Maharashtra.

19. This information is again from Parshuram Vishram.

20. The information about these scrolls has been obtained from Shrilal Joshi of Bhilwara, Rajasthan.

21. According to popular belief, Pabuji, being a divine incarnation, could not have succumbed to ordinary death and therefore did not die but attained divine status.

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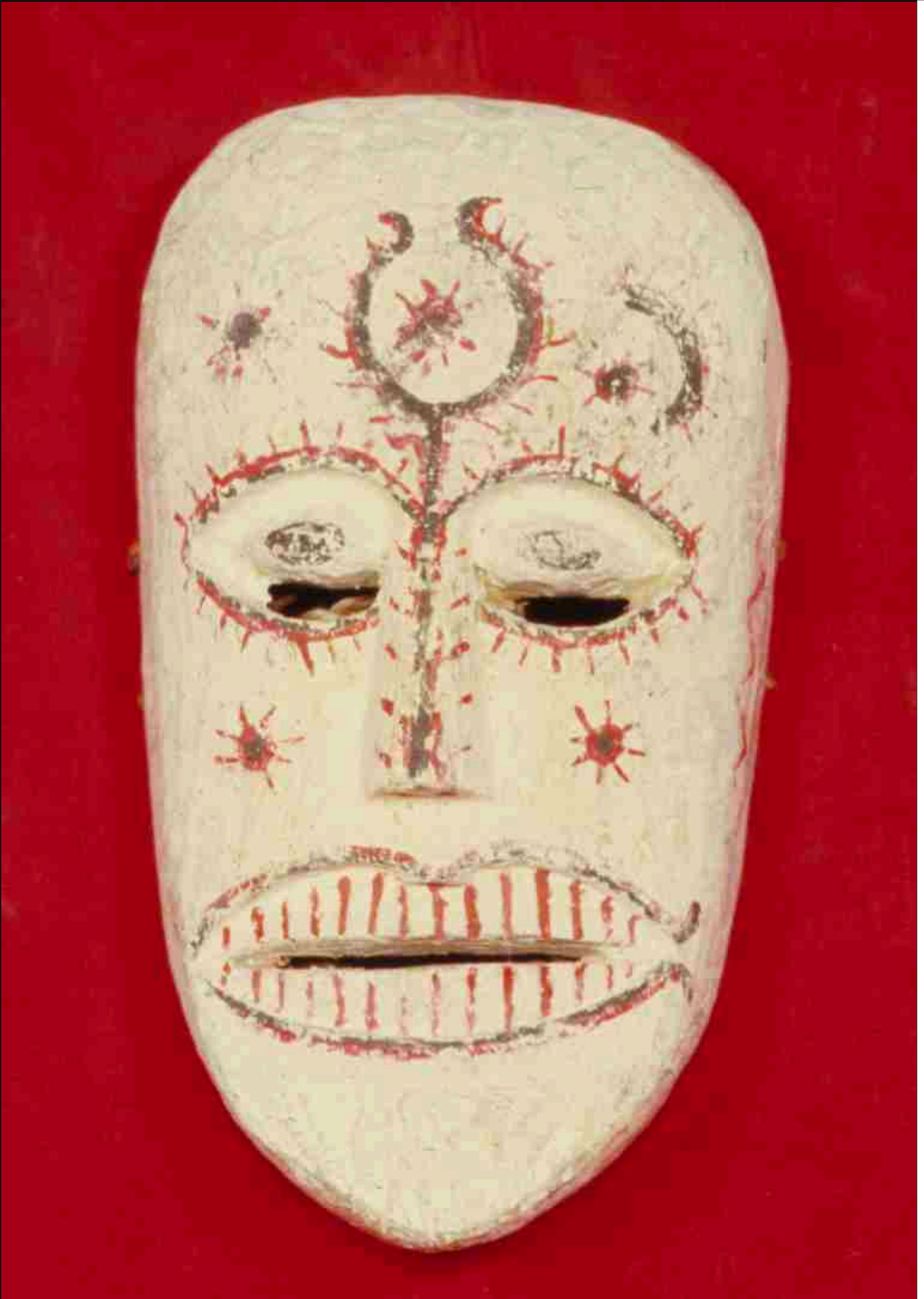
24. Shapiro, op. cit., p. 9.

25. This situation is typical of Sanskrit drama where characters on the stage act as though they are oblivious of one another, while the audience can see both.

26. Shapiro, op. cit., p. 38.

Captions to Illustrations *(figs.)*

1. A *phad* showing Pabuji in his royal court.
2. A *phad* showing Pabuji's fight with a tiger.
3. *Bhopa* and *diyala* narrating a Dev Narayan *phad*.
4. Deconsecration ritual of a Pabuji *phad*.
5. Garoda picture showmen narrating a scroll.
6. Garoda scroll depicting Hanuman and Ravana.
7. Garoda scroll showing Bhima.
8. A *patua* scroll depicting Goddess Durga.
9. A *yama pata* depicting punishments in hell.
10. Chitrakathi painting depicting Ravana in his harem.
11. A *patua* scroll showing the advent of cinema in Bengal.
12. A *patua* scroll depicting Indira Gandhi's assassination.
13. A *patua* scroll depicting the 9/11 incident.
14. A *patua* scroll depicting the Tsumani.
15. A Santal scroll depicting the creation myth.
16. A Santal scroll depicting Shiva escorted by policemen.



Tradition of Story Telling in India through Masks*

Compilation by *Vishalakshi Nigam Chandra and Veronica Chishi*

The actor who dons the mask undergoes transformation of his whole being and only through the knowledge of his own body and its gestures can he truly enter into the character and put aside all appearance of the commonplace. There are gestures which have a mouth, fingers which have a voice. The mask helps to facilitate the journey into fantasy, cancelling the reality of the present for the benefit of a more vast reality.

(Nonus de Ponopulis, 5th century BC)

Introduction

Masks are one of the earliest creations of humans to establish a relationship between the outer world and the inner person. Masks are used to impersonate an 'other'- a person, a celestial being, an animal or an otherworldly character. Usually, masks denote expressions of serenity, divinity, fantasy or just buffoonery[i]. Masks are used as instruments of revelation to connect the seen with the unseen. The mask is perhaps one of the oldest means of transformation of the self into another persona. Masks are used to invoke, propitiate and appease supernatural powers; to impersonate, entertain; to reveal or conceal. Earlier they were also used during the rituals connected with success in hunting, victory in wars, initiation rites and the warding off of evil and disease.

Background and Genesis

Bharat Gupt in his exposition on masks points out that in the ancient Greek and Indian traditions, the wearing of the mask (*prosopon*) or covering the actor's visage with coloured paste (*mukharaga)* was based upon the idea of 'rebirth'[ii]. Like a soul reborn for the sake of performance, the actor gives up his own self to take upon a new self. Mask is used as a medium to bring about a transformation in the identity of the wearer and this establishes an active link of interplay between the notion of presence and absence. The masked dancer is an amalgam of the inanimate and the animate, the other and the self, the static and dynamic, matter and energy. The mask was regarded as the true face of a character. For the ancients, putting on the mask was not a metamorphosis, or "transformation". The artist did not undergo a special change through *enthousiasmos* or external possession to become somebody else; He very consciously took up the new dramatic self. He further elaborates that the Greek word for the face *prosopon*, means that which is set before the eye and that it is also applied for a mask. Mask here is seen as a device by which the actor impersonates the 'character' signified by it. In contrast, the closest Sanskrit equivalent, *purusha* or *manusha*, means a person or the micro-self who embodies the macro-cosmic dimension[iii].

Suresh Awasthi points out that the word for mask used in the *Natyashastra* is *Pratishirshak*, meaning head cover, which suggests it was something of the type of a helmet rather than a full face mask. Later, Abhinavagupta, noted eleventh century commentator on the *Natyashastra*, also referred to masks suggesting the continuity of its use in dramatic performances[iv].

Masks have been used for different reasons and purposes throughout the ages. B.M. Pande in the IGNCA volume on "Mind, Man and Mask"(2001) points out that there is evidence in the Mesolithic and Upper Paleolithic cave paintings of Central India that masks have been used in South Asia since 15000 B.C., and possibly much earlier. Dancing figures- some wearing animal masks and carrying bows and arrows, other wearing what seem to be more abstract masks- appear in the rock art of Bhimbetka and Ladi-ki-karar. While the dating of these images remains tentative and the function of the masks highly conjectural, entotic designs accompanying some of the masked figures indicate that trance ceremonies may have been involved and suggest dances of exorcism and renewal. Miniature clay masks and mask-like images have also been found at Mohenjo-Daro. The next example of masks are of the early historic period and among them the earliest is the terracotta masks found at Chirand in Chhapra district, Bihar which has been roughly dated from the third-fourth century BC[v].

Ritual Significance and the Making of Masks

Masks are seen as sacred objects. They are worshipped and venerated and sometimes even feared. They carry within them the mysterious powers of the natural and supernatural phenomena they represent. Elaborate rituals and ceremonies are observed in the making, preservation and disposal of masks. Ritual worship and taboos of various kinds are observed throughout the process of making of masks, beginning with the selection of right tree and curing of wood for carving, and continuing through the entire process of its making. Both the makers and wearers of the masks are bound by several taboos. Usually they are not allowed to eat certain types of food, consume alcohol, and have sexual intercourse, etc. for a prescribed period of time before and during the performance. However the most sacred and important ceremony is the last act where life in the mask is infused by the maker through a ritual called "opening the eyes" on its completion. This ritual not only imparts life to the mask, but also strengthens its magical powers and ritual efficacy. The masks are either preserved at a sacred place near/ inside the temple or shrine, or are

destroyed immediately after the performance[vi].

The making of masks is an exacting seasonal work which demands the efforts of a considerable number of qualified and gifted individuals. These people mostly belong to craftsmen's groups and castes, such as carpenters, potters, painters and producers of votive objects and traditional ornaments.

The masks are mostly modeled along the lines of long-established schemes and painted in various colours according to appropriate iconographic rules. The colours are chosen in accordance with their traditional symbolic significance. Originally natural pigments were used, both mineral and vegetable, but these are now replaced mostly by synthetic paints. The design is usually executed in rich, bright and intentionally contrasting colours and then covered with transparent varnish, which protects the paint and makes it more vivid. Popular material used for masks is wood or paper.

Local tradition determines which characters are to wear a mask and which are to remain unmasked. Masks are usually worn by actors representing the local guardian deities and Hindu gods of theriomorphic forms, the terrible aspects of which are expected to arouse awe and fear. This group includes various village gods and goddesses, spirits of nature, ancestral spirits and deified heroes. Among the Hindu gods, mask of goddess Kali, Narasimha, and Ganesha are very popular[vii].

Ganesha's mask is perhaps most frequent. Many traditional performances begin with an invocatory dance and song to Ganesha, to ensure the success of every performance.

Some Popular Themes and Mask Traditions in India

The themes of masked performances are mostly taken from mythology. Their main source is the classical epics of India, especially episodes that depict fights and battles between the gods and the demons. The story of Rama and his battle with Ravana, the miraculous deeds of Krishna are much favoured, as are the fights of the goddess Kali against the demons, and the fourth incarnation of the god Vishnu as Narasimha in the form of half-man and half-lion. Village deities and other gods and goddesses, ancestral and totemic spirits, spirits personifying the phenomena of natural and supernatural world enrich this repertoire.

The majority of these dances and dance-dramas are performed in temple courtyards or open spaces in front of the shrines. These performances are usually connected with the annual calendar of festivals of a community and are staged before planting and harvesting to appease, propitiate and seek blessings from the deities and to ward off evil. They are usually accompanied by ritual worship, dancing, singing, chanting, drumming and possession. Besides the dancers, in some of these dance-dramas, significant role is played by the narrator and the chorus, who introduce the individual pantomimic scenes with the recital of respective myths.

Despite a rich and wide diversity of mask traditions and associated performances in India, one can delineate some important categories of Mask traditions in India:

I. Masks associated with the epics of the Ramayana, Mahabharata and mythological repertoire of the Puranas.

ii. Masks associated with Buddhist traditions.

iii. Masks associated with local cults and regional pantheon of deities, spirits and other forces and phenomena of the natural and the supernatural worlds.

iv. Masks that reveal varied human emotions and contours both physiological and psychological.

v. Masks that reveal social conflicts and issues of the contemporary world.

Throughout the monasteries in the Himalayan ranges, from Tibet to Ladakh, Bhutan and Sikkim, Tibetan monks perform mask dances known as *Chham*, wearing masks and elaborate costumes. One of the most popular themes of these monastery daces is the life and deed of the great Guru Padmasambhava. These dances propitiate the deity, kill the evil king and protect the people from the wrath of natural calamities, diseases and epidemics and ensure health, happiness, and prosperity for the people of the area. The lamas prepare the masks which are made of wood and *papier mache* with a thin coat of plaster[viii].

The Monpa and the Sherdukpen communities of Arunachal Pradesh are excellent carvers and use a wide variety of masks. Their masks are mostly made of wood. The Sherdukpen also use felt for some of their masks, decorating it with colourful materials and cowrie shells and framing them with the hair of mountain goats. These masks are used in pantomimes such as *Ajilamu, Jiji Sukham, Arakacho Cham*, etc[ix].

Yuddhar Nach in Assam is a 'war-dance', with god Krishna as the vanquisher of evil. Here the masks are reserved for demons, including the bird-demon Bakasura with a huge beak, and the mythological bird Garuda who attends upon God Vishnu. The masks are made by the members of the local *Khanikar* caste who are traditional producers of votive sculpture made of clay. *Mukha Bhaona* is another form of folk drama from Assam, whose themes are, derived from the epics[x].

Masked performances are equally popular in the Eastern Indian states of Bihar, Bengal and Orissa. The main inspiration for the dances and dance dramas using masks are battles of gods and demons, mythical heroes, and various groups of demons fighting against one another, as depicted in the local versions of Indian epics and Puranas, local folk and tribal myths. One of the oldest Bengali dance-drama performed with masks is the *Gambhira* dance, found in the Maldah district of West Bengal. This drama consists of a series of solo dances of deities, the central figure being the goddess Kali who symbolizes the vital energy (*shakti*) of her divine partner Shiva. The drama also contains a comic scene performed by two dancers wearing the masks of an old man and an old woman[xi].

The masks of the gods have detailed features and their carving and painting focuses on traditional iconographic symbols. For example, Kali is characterized by her black skin colour, a long thrust-out tongue and a high ray-shaped crown decorated with tuft; Shiva by a white face provided with a third eye on the forehead, and a knot of hair wound up with snakes on the head. Typical of the demon masks are large pointed ears and a cock-crest-shaped ridge on their heads.

A peculiarity of all these masks is their painted decoration. This consists of stylized rosettes, spirals and tendrils, symmetrically spread over the cheeks, forehead, temples and chin of the mask. However, in contrast to the massive size of the mask, they produce an unusually gentle effect.

Initially, the *Gambhira* was performed at the spring solstice festival and was considered to be an effective offering for securing substantial rain and a good harvest for the villagers. Nowadays it is only danced in remote villages. *Asura-vadha* is another dance form which uses masks. It is held annually at the spring solstice enacting the battle between the goddess Kali and the demons (*asura*), ending with the vanquishing of the evils. These masks are made of wood. The faces depicted in these masks are, in contrast to the static *Gambhira* masks, carved into a dramatic grimace.

Village dance dramas called *mukha-khel* meaning 'play of faces' (or mask drama) performed in northern Bengal, mostly borrow their subject matter from the Bengali version of the Ramayana. These masks are stylized in a simple but expressive way, with the eyes placed close to each other, with narrow, slot-shaped or rounded holes placed below them for seeing. The decorative painted details of the face are somewhat reminiscent of the painting of the *Gambhira* masks[xii].

The face masks of Orissa may also be put together with eastern India's wooden masks because of their high level of craftsmanship. They are carved from local wood by *chitrakars*, the traditional painters and producers of votive objects, who are scattered all over Orissa. These are dynamic masks with caricaturing the Hindu ascetics. Helmet masks have been also recorded among the Gonds of Madhya Pradesh. These masks personify demons (*rakshasa*) and are also connected with an interesting myth about the origin of the Gond masks. These are said to be the heads of demons which were cut off by the Hindu deity Krishna because they disturbed him in his game of love with the *gopis* (the milk-maid companions). *Gopis* felt sorry for the demons and asked lord Krishna to put their heads back but Krishna refused. He, however, promised that their heads would serve the purpose of entertainment in the form of masks.

Among the Eastern Indian masks, the best known are those used in the dance-drama called *chau*, *chho* or *chha*. Chau is the traditional ritual dance-drama held on the occasion of the annual sun festival around the 14th of April. The word *chau or chho* has been derived from the Sanskrit word *Chhaya* which means 'shadow."[xiv] These plays are performed in connection with the Shivaganjam, a Shaiva festival, in the Purulia and Midnapur districts of West Bengal and the Seraikela district of Bihar. The subjects of the Purulia and Midnapur dramas are basically the fights and battles between the gods and the demons. They are performed wearing masks and colourful costumes. According to some scholars and popular belief these plays have developed from tribal war dances. Later they came to be patronized by the local courts and acquired content from Hindu mythology.

The dance masks are made of layered paper, cloth and potter's clay and are modeled in a clay mould. The main centres of production are the village of Charida near the town of Bhagmundi in Purulia, which is the oldest centre of these dances. The most distinguishing features of the *chau* masks of Seraikela are the stylized arch-like eyebrows and elongated half-closed eyes. Masks of gods, goddesses and heroes have highly decorative head-dresses made of *zari* (gold or silver thread) and artificial pearls. Headdress is mounted on the mask[xv].

The *chau* masks from Seraikela are heart-shaped, reminding one of the shapes of betel leaves and are provided with oblique half-closed eyes and a tiny mouth. A prototype of this style is the mask of the moon maid in the love drama *Chandrabhaga*[xvi].

Mukhada is a mask worn by the tribal people of Madhya Pradesh during ritualistic dances and festivals.

They are made from cardboard and wood. A nose is constructed using honeybee wax. Teeth are made of pumpkin seeds or rice grains. Bangles are used to mark the eyes. Moustaches, beards and hair are made using goat or bear hair. In Madhya Pradesh we find carved masked images of animal like snakes and insects.

Bhils in the Udaipur district, use an interesting mask in the ritual dance drama called *Gavari***.** Although 26 people take part in the play, only one of them wears a mask –the main character called *buria*. Bhil artists traditionally shape the mask as a large wooden disc with sharp facial feature. The mask is painted orange and is decorated with various coloured strips of paper.

In South India the traditions of mask are rich and varied. In Kerala and southern Karnataka, the masks are worn along with elaborate costumes and huge head gears optically enlarging the figures of the dancers, especially their heights, to a couple of meters. *Krishnattam* of Kerala (16th century) is the oldest surviving performance form which uses wooden masks for a variety of characters, including Brahma, the god of creation, Yama, the god of death, and various demons. It enacts the Krishna legend in a cyclic format of eight plays. The most interesting feature of these masks is that the complex and colourful geometrical patterns suggest the type of the character and resemble the make-up in Kathakali[xvii].

In Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, masks are connected with religious festival like *Bhagavatmela* at which the *Parahlada Charitam*, a drama about Prahalad and Vishnu incarnated as Narasimha is performed. The mask which is kept in the temple and worshipped along with the deity is ceremonially taken out for the annual performance. After the performance is over, it is ceremonially taken back. The person enacting the role of Narasimha often gets possessed, and to control his fury and prevent him from attacking the spectators, he is tied with ropes.

Kaliattam is a lesser known mask performance of Tamil Nadu. Several mythological characters like *Pacha Kali*, *Pavazha Kali*, *Narasimman Shiva,* are part of this performance. The performers wear colourful masks of these deities the episode of killing the demon *Mahishasuram*.

Theyyam is a ritualistic dance, predominant in the Kolathunadu area in North Kerala is known for its rare and grotesque make-up and costume, lively foot work, gymnastic fervor and ritualistic vitality. It is believed that the souls of the dead heroes of the land and the gods and goddesses enter the bodies of the possessed dancers and converse with the living ones. It is a form of worshipping the spirits by invoking them in the mortal body of the dancer who serves as a medium for their manifestation. The performers belong to Mannan, Velan and Malayan communities. *Theyyam* dance is performed as an offering for begetting children, winning of law suits, warding off evils, getting rid of epidemics etc[xviii].

Kummatti is another popular mask-dance of Kerala. The performers wear heavily painted colourful masks depicting faces of Krishna, Narada, Kirathas-the hunters, and others. The themes of *Kummatti* performance are mostly taken from the stories of Ramayana, *Darika Vadham* etc.

Mudiyettu is a more elaborate and dramatic form of ritual dance associated with the goddess cult. The performance enacts the popular myth of goddess' battle with the demon Darika, and his eventual annihilation by her. The elaborate and intricate head gears, costume and facial painting add to the spectacle. The performers of *Mudiyettu* hail from the Marar and Kuruppu community. It is usually celebrated after the harvest season in the period between February and May.

Masks used in the *Ramlila* performances of Ramnagar near Varanasi consist of a facial part and a crown richly decorated with engraved and embossed ornaments. They are relatively wide and shallow, their faces being modeled in an economical way, except that in some places certain details are emphasized with white, red or black paint. The masks of the Ravana and his retinue are usually made of cloth stretched over a solid base. The masks have eye-holes cut through, and the ornamental elements are embroidered with gold and silver tinsel and metal threads combined with decorative embroidery. There is no hole for the mouth, and the actor must therefore lift the mask with his hand to uncover his mouth while talking[xix].

The world of Indian masks evokes visions of gods, demons, clowns, totems, ancestral spirits, personified forces of nature and cosmic worlds. They also portray highly stylized human faces with exaggerated expressions features evoking varied emotional, physiological and psychological responses and aesthetic principles. In the tradition of using masks for storytelling, the performer internalizes the features/characteristics of the masks and in this act he loses his 'self' to become the mask, either to reveal or conceal; to connect or disconnect.

* This article is based on information collected from different sources as mentioned in the bibliography at the end of this article. One of the major sources has been the exhibition catalogue and seminar proceedings of the earlier international event on masks organized by the IGNCA "Rupa-Pratirupa: Mind, Man and Mask" in 1998. Compiled by Ms. Vishalakshi Nigam Chandra (JRF) and Ms. Veronica Chishi (JRF), Janapada Sampada Division, IGNCA.

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Storytelling and Puppet Traditions of India

Dhurjjati Sarma (JRF) and Ahanthem Homen Singh (Project Assistant)

Introduction

Puppetry has been one of most vibrant and long-thriving theatrical forms in India. It is at once, the simplest and the most intricate of enactments where there are infinite possibilities for innovation and improvisation. A puppet may be defined as any inanimate figure given life by the will and spirit of man (Asian Puppets: 1976)[i]. As such, there are twin levels of performance where the puppeteer at first, conceptualizes and internalizes the set of roles to be enacted and subsequently, transfers them upon the "inanimate" puppets. Thereby, the audience is confronted with a dual presence – the "omnipresent" puppeteer/master-performer sharing the space with the "animated" puppets which play into the hands of the puppeteer. An important task of the puppeteer is to transform the puppet from being a mere "figure" towards embodying a distinct "character". For this, the puppeteer applies various techniques of manipulation and the various types of puppet forms corresponding to the demands of the character.

The puppeteer in India usually culls materials from his own traditions and also applies his creativity in formulating the appearance and function of his puppets. The latter is highly essential if the puppets have to come to life on-stage. However, in the matters of the types of puppets used as well as the way they are manipulated, the tradition inherited by the puppeteer plays a determining role. The stories performed range from tales based on the re-workings of the epics to the legends espousing the heroism and valor of the local heroes. The narrative of Amar Singh Rathore within the string puppet tradition of Rajasthan is a classic example of a folk legend represented through puppetry.

Genesis and Origins

The origins of puppetry in India can be dated back to the pre-historic period when man residing in caves, was enamored by the images cast on the wall by flames whereby he could envision a shadowy picture of himself and his fellow beings, with all their gestures and attempts at communication being replicated visually upon the walls of the caves. This seems to be the beginning of man's endeavor to recreate and revivify idols in his own likeness. Images and idols were created for magical/shamanic purposes, for the sake of appeasing the malevolent natural forces like gods and demons, which they represented in visible forms[ii].

According to one Indian legend, the origin of puppetry is attributed to Brahma (the deity who was assigned the function of creating the universe and is the first of the Hindu trinity). It is said that for the entertainment of his wife Saraswati, Brahma created and gave life to the adi, the first nat puppeteer. He then again, created another figure for the nat to manipulate and thereby entertain the goddess. However, Brahma was not very pleased with his efforts and he therefore, banished the puppeteer to earth and hence was the birth of the first bhat. It is conjectured that this legend might have originated in Rajasthan since the nat bhats are the caste of puppeteers belonging to the region (Asian Puppets: 1976). Coomaraswamy (1945: 293) refers to the demi-god Vishwakarma as the "holder of every thread" and thereby hints at the analogy between the demi-god and the puppeteer, who attains the status of the former by giving life to his puppets.[iii]

The oldest written mention of puppetry in India is in the Mahabharata. According to Coomaraswamy, Panini, the 4th century B.C. Sanskrit grammarian, and Patanjali, the philosopher and author of the Yoga sutras in the 2nd century B.C., alluded to puppets in their works[iv]. One of the contentious issues regarding the origins of puppetry has been its possible linkages with the origins of theatrical art and drama, especially with the vast corpus of Sanskrit literature extending its domain throughout the Asian continent. These theories of drama have often stressed upon the relationship which existed between the classical form and the various popular forms of folk drama. Of these disparate forms of folk renditions, puppetry seemed to have the strongest links with the earliest development of dramatic literatures in India[v].

R. Pischel was one of the theoreticians propagating the secular origins of Sanskrit dramatic literature. To this end, he pointed out that Sanskrit drama had its origin in some form of puppet drama, and he referred to several conventions and practices found in Sanskrit drama which had their derivations from puppetry and were later assimilated into drama proper. In his opinion, the application of the term sutradhara for the director or the stage-manager who presents the Sanskrit play before the audience alludes to the close connections that had existed between the puppet drama and drama proper[vi]. In order to validate his argument, Pischel refers to sutra-prata (tied with strings) as a term used to describe puppets in Mahabharata. Similarly, the word sthapaka (the setter) or the assistant of the sutradhara has been understood by Pischel as 'the stage-setter' or 'the arranger of puppets'[vii].

As mentioned earlier, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata provided the puppeteer with enormous sources to play with. However, the re-enactment of the episodes from the epics in the folk styles must not be

seen as an exercise in exploring mere instances of imitation and inspiration. Indian literary and performative traditions have an ongoing practice of continually reviving and re-inscribing "texts" with new contours of meaning and significance. The presence of multiple versions of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata within the written, oral and folk traditions of the country gives credence to the fact that the constructed hierarchy between the "original" and the "adapted" would prove misleading to such a study within the Indian context. In fact, Indian literary and performative traditions present a number of instances where there are multiple renderings of a text which have sustained themselves in many regional quarters of the country. They mark a radical departure from the supposed "original" text to the extent that they should be better termed as "re-tellings" and "re-renderings". Tellings, according to Ramanujam (1991), constitute a pool of signifiers involving plot, characters, names, geography, incidents and relations. It should be noted that the process here is not one-way traffic since the relationship between the "original" and the "later" versions of the text becomes essentially symbiotic in nature. In such a scenario, Ram may represent the Aryan race, personifying the kshatriya codes of valor and kinship or completely identify with the local community as their cultural hero and one of their ancestors, upholding the moral codes and ethical values of the clan; the monkey-god Hanuman may become a totemic deity or represent the indigenous population of the country, Ravan, the ten-headed demon who is sometimes portrayed as the representation of the Dravidian race may appear elsewhere, as a clan deity. Prof. Molly Kaushal observes that, "While retaining the structural and thematic unity of the text, communities weave their own plots and sub-plots into the texts ... Linking the text with local geography and rituals; (and) by incorporating songs and narrative from the native repertoire..., each group renders its version locally and contextually bound, many a times making it an ancestral tale of its origins." (2008:5)[viii]

Ritual Significance

Puppetry has been part of the sacred rituals which were performed to propitiate the gods and spirits. This tradition continues even to this day. It is believed that commissioning a puppet performance is equivalent to an act of divine service. The puppet plays are staged or commissioned to cure and eradicate diseases of men and animals, to ensure fertility of a woman as well as of the fields, to invoke the rain gods to procure rain, or to free a person from an evil spirit's possession. In Karnataka, the episode of 'Virataparva' from the Mahabharat is performed through puppet plays to appease the rain god[ix]. In Tamil Nadu, Bommalattam are performed in villages and temples to ensure rain as well as to placate gods to prevent the outbreak of diseases[x]. Sometimes they are also performed as part of the death ceremony. Moreover, certain rites are associated with the making and maintaining of the puppets. The puppeteers perform ritualistic sacrifices before creating the puppets and also when the figures are finished. In Karnataka, while making characters like Ravan, Kali etc., fowls are sacrificed and the figures are applied black tinge as the final touch (S.A. Krishnaiah: 1987). In some puppet traditions, the marking of eyes on the puppet which signifies the infusion of life into it is observed with sacrifices. The puppets are also worshipped on certain religious occasions. Apart from it, as a ritual, the puppeteers regularly applied neem or eucalyptus oil on the puppets. This is beneficial as they act as a protective agent against insects and fungus and help in preserving the puppets[xi].

It is to be noted that for the puppeteers, the puppets are not merely theatrical devices to earn a livelihood but revered objects which deserve special care. The sense of sacredness of the puppets could be discerned from the fact that they enacted stories and episodes taken from the epics and the Puranas, and also deriving from local beliefs. As a custom, the disfigured or torn puppets are never kept together with the fine puppets. Once the puppets could no longer be put to act in front of the audiences due to excessive wear and tear, after appropriate worship, they are either disposed of into the river or symbolically cremated. In certain puppet traditions of India, the performers fasted before the show and sacrifices were made while putting up posts for the erection of stages. This kind of proceedings invested the performance of puppets with an aura of mystic ritual. The puppet theatre also acts as a means of spreading religious ethos and beliefs through the enactment of plays with religious themes.

Apart from providing entertainment, puppet shows disseminate important ethical lessons, especially through the portrayal of conflicts between the good and the evil and ultimately the victory of the good over evil. The religious aspects of puppets developed especially in South India when the shadow puppets performed stories and episodes from the epics and the Bhagavat Purana[xii]. Puppets have been featured in the major religious festivals like Shivaratri at the Srisalim temple of Andhra Pradesh as indigenous entertainment (M. Nagabhushana: 1990). Tolpava Koothu, a puppet play of Kerala is performed as a part of the annual festival in temples of Bhagavati or Bhadrakali of Palghat in Kerala[xii].

Tradition of Puppets in India

The purposes behind the manipulation of puppet figures can be variously defined as curing illnesses, ensuring fertility, eradicating the evil, propagating religious faith and also imparting education through entertainment or to just tell a story. In most parts of Asia as well as in India, there are four distinct types of puppets[xiv]:

1. Hand/Glove Puppet:

This is a type of puppetry where the puppeteer's hand is slipped inside the puppet and its movements are acted out by his fingers. Usually the forefinger becomes the head of the puppet and the thumb and the third finger act as its two hands. Hand/glove puppetry is quite prevalent in Orissa, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. A popular glove puppet play in Kerala known as Pava Kathakali uses puppets which are carved delicately in wood, painted, gilded and decorated by transparent coral and peacock feathers. The puppets are carved in the manner of Kathakali actors with their headdresses and costumes. The puppeteers adapt episodes from the dance stories of Kathakali. Most of these stories are from the Mahabharata, namely 'Kalyanasaugandhikam', 'Uttaraswayamvaram' and 'Duryodhanavadham'. The heads and the arms of the puppets are carved out of wood and these puppets are from 30 to 60 centimeters in height.

In Orissa, the play of glove puppets is called Kundhei Nach (kundhei means 'doll' and nach means 'dance'). Another glove puppet tradition is Gulabo-Sitabo, performed in and around Lucknow since the 17th century. Gulabo and Sitabo are shown as two women characters who are married to the same man. While Gulabo is shown as an arrogant and domineering wife, Sitabo on the other hand, is portrayed as one who is docile and submissive. Earlier the heads were painted and crafted in wood, but for the last hundred years or so, papier mache is used. This art is fast declining owing to lack of patronage and the advent of popular mass media. Another glove puppet tradition thriving in the Medinipur district is Benir Putul Naach. The heads of the puppets are made out of terracotta and the hands and stumps are carved out of wood. The puppets have bells and cymbals attached to their wrists. This group of glove puppeteers is composed of itinerant performers who move from one place to another with their performances.

2. Rod Puppet:

Traditionally, rod puppetry prospered in the states of Orissa and Bengal. The rod puppets in Orissa are called Kathikundhei Nach (rod doll dance). The rod puppeteers from Orissa perform extensively from the Ramayana and also the popular narrative of Mahishasurmardini, the story of Durga slaying the demon Mahisha. The puppets are about 60 centimeters in height; their heads are carved out of wood and are painted. Bengal's tradition of rod puppet performance is known as Daanger Putul Nach. The themes of this performance are derived from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Puranas and jatras.

Apart from these, other popular narratives, like that of Sati Behula and Manasa Devi, are also performed. Often, the scripts of popular jatras are adapted for puppet performances. These rod puppets can be up to 1.25 meters in height and about 5 to 10 kilograms in weight. Their faces are painted in the pata style, with clay or a cloth layer upon it. The performances are characterized by high pitched singing and dialogue delivery accompanied by elaborate costuming, thereby approximating closely in style the popular jatra performance. These puppeteers belong to the southern regions of West Bengal. The group normally consists of a lead singer accompanied by 18 other members.

Apart from these, there is a composite puppet-form in Tamil Nadu named Bommalattam which uses both string and rod puppetry. This puppet dance was widely performed in temples and rural areas in and around Thanjavur, whose rulers used to patronize it. The performances were intended to ensure the timely arrival of monsoon and to placate the deities. On the night of Shivratri, the Bommalattam puppeteers enact the stories of Mrukundamuni, Marudhvati and their son Markandeya. The puppets have rods fixed to their hands and are about 90 centimeters in height. The rods, unlike other forms of rod puppetry are attached from above. Strings are attached to the heads and limbs of the puppets. Smaller puppets are manipulated by strings only. There are two singers, one male and one female and they sing with the accompaniment of musicians.

3. String Puppet:

This puppet tradition is prevalent in Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. Sakhi kundhei (companion doll) also known as sakhi nata, is Orissa's string puppet. The puppets are made of wood and the long flowing decorative skirts hide the legs. A puppet is manipulated by the strings (usually five to seven) attached to a triangular wooden control. Most of the puppet plays are based on the Radha-Krishna legends and the music heavily draws on the folk musical traditions of the region. The puppets of Bommalattam (doll dance) of Tamil Nadu are among the heaviest and the largest puppets with some of them being as big as 4.5 feet in height and weighing over 10 kilos. The performances are based on stories from the two Epics and the Puranas. Sutrada Gombeyetta (puppet dance) is a string puppet tradition of Karnataka. It is similar to the Yakshagana theatre performances especially in regard to the theme, the structure of performance, music, costumes, jewellery and facial make-ups. The puppets are made of wood and are about 1 metre tall and weigh about 6 to 8 kilograms. Usually they perform prasangas (episodes) from the Epics and the Puranas.

The string puppet tradition of Rajasthan is called kathputli (wooden doll). In this tradition the puppets are carved out of a single block of wood and generally stand 1.5 feet in height. The puppets have long flowing skirts that hide the feet and their arms and hands are made of stuffed rags. Only two or three strings are attached to the puppets except in the case of the figure rasdhari (dancer) which have about nine strings attached to it.

The local legends of Rajasthan are rendered through these puppets and manipulated by nats or bhats, a nomadic community. Among the legends, the bravery and exploits of Amar Singh Rathore, a Rajput chieftain in Mughal emperor Shahjahan's court, is very popular. In this puppet performance, the puppeteers manage a high-pitched voice through the use of a reed made from a small piece of split bamboo. Music has an important place in this performance. In Maharashtra, the string puppet tradition is called kalasutri bahalye (threadskill doll). Here the puppets' figures are artistically carved and painted. Sadly, this tradition is dying fast in Maharashtra.

4. Shadow Puppet:

Perhaps one of the oldest forms of puppetry, shadow puppets are found in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa and Tamil Nadu. Ravan Chhaya from Orissa and Tholpavai Koothu from Kerala are the two prominent shadow puppet theatre traditions of India. The traditional performers of Ravan Chhaya are from the community of bhats who received the patronage of the local rajas of Pallahara in the shape of land grants. The puppets are made from the skins of deer, mountain goats and sheep and they are not painted so as to retain their natural colours. Sizes of the puppets vary from less than 20 centimeters to over 60 centimeters, with no joints. This tradition is named after Ravan as it is believed that Ram, a divine and illuminated being, does not cast a shadow. The story is taken from the Oriya version of the Ramayana called Vichitra Ramayana by Vishvanath Khuntia, a 17th century poet. On the other hand, Tholpavai Koothu is an ancient form of art dedicated to goddess Bhagavathi, worshipped by the Hindu community of Kerala as the Mother Goddess. The puppets are opaque, thus casting black and white shadow, mainly in sitting or standing profile. Episodes from the Tamil Ramayana by Kamban (12th century) and Sanskrit plays like Mahanatak are suitably adapted for these performances.

Tolu Bommalatta (leather puppet dance) of Andhra Pradesh have puppets that are of human size with several joints. They are translucent and cast coloured shadows on the screens. Interestingly, only Tolu Bommalatta performances present episodes from the Mahabharata like 'Draupadi Vastra Haran' (disrobing of Draupadi), 'Keechak Vadha' (killing of Keechak) etc., unlike other shadow puppet traditions. As for the stories of the Ramayana, they rely upon Ranganath's Ramayana in Telugu (16th century) which was written exclusively for the puppet shows. This performance is accompanied by high pitched songs and instruments with verses recited at appropriate situations. The shadow puppet show of Karnataka, Todale Gombeatta shares certain similarities with Andhra Pradesh's Tolu Bommalatta. The figures in this puppet show are also translucent and they shed coloured shadows. The performers are from the Killikyeta tribe of Maharashtra who migrated to Karnataka but they use Kannada in their performances. The stories and themes for the performances are taken from the Ramayana, especially the Kannada Thorave Ramayana, the Bhagavata Purana and various folk tales.

Puppetry is an art where one can see a fusion of different art forms like painting, sculpture, music, dance, drama and narration etc. Right from the beginning when the puppets are made, the art of extracting the hides of animals or cutting the wood, drawing and cutting the design of the puppets and embellishing the figures, every step in the process requires wide variety of skills. While making the puppet figures, numerous patterns or designs are created on them so as to beautify them as well as give appropriate properties related to the characters. For example, Lord Ganapati sitting on a mouse with a snake tied around his protruding belly, Yama carrying a rope and sitting on a buffalo or Saraswati with a stringed musical instrument[xv]. The physical features of the puppets follow some general conventions like the female are of shorter stature than male with slim waists, broad hips etc. Demonic characters are usually presented with big swords or huge boulders in their hands while a thick twist of hair on the head depict a Brahmin. Royal and noble characters could be identified with certain motifs like drawings of elephant or horse, palanquin and with a retinue of attendants etc. Ornamentation and decoration in costumes also highlight the cultural background and status of the puppet character.

The crafting of puppet figures also reflects the heritage of the arts and crafts of that particular region. For example, the shadow puppet figures of Todale Gombeyetta (Karnataka) are translucent and are attributed with various traditional features through elaborate use of color, line, cutting and incising. These figures, which are usually large, are made from parchment and the ornaments are made through perforation of certain parts. Colouring of the puppets were earlier done from natural dyes but has been substituted by artificial chemical dyes nowadays. Commonly, puppet figures are made by tracing the design on the hide and then cutting out the outlines. Either a model of an old puppet is taken or it is entirely based on the puppeteers' memory and imagination. Even the entry of puppets on the stage follows some general conventions like the divine characters enter from the right wing of the audience while others from the left wing. Demon-like figures usually make their entry from above. As a theatrical prop, sometimes these characters are made to carry burning torches and are sprinkled with resin powder to cause a sudden burst of flame. Such techniques allow the puppeteers to instill a sense of fear and awe among the spectators[xvi]. Thus apart from the manipulation of the movements and physical gestures of the puppets, various theatrical props are used to draw the attention of the spectators during the performances.

The Puppet and the Puppeteer

In the Indian religious tradition, God is regarded as the main sutradhara or 'string holder' of the universe. Similarly, the puppets come alive and play their roles only at the hands of the puppeteers. Interestingly, in

this art the puppeteer externalizes his self through the puppets by manipulating its every move during the performances. The puppet becomes a medium to express the human gestures and also a representation of man's innate urge to re-create life. The puppeteer, before creating his puppet has to study its role within the entire repertoire of performance. This enables the puppeteer to make a judicious selection of the materials needed to create the puppets. The greatest challenge before the puppeteer is to depict the nuances of a character upon the static and unchangeable face of the puppet. An aspect where the puppeteer has to exercise tremendous caution is to ensure that the puppets are not made to execute any movements which are impossible for the human body to perform. These are however, only prescriptive notions and it remains to be seen if the puppets actually enact fantastic movements upon the stage or not[xvii].

Sometimes, the art of making puppets is the sole monopoly of certain groups like the Viswakarma community of Karnataka who are specialists in making string puppets[xviii]. As almost all the puppet troupes are family theatre troupes, learning and teaching the art forms a vital part of their children's education. The puppeteers, in addition to making the puppets act out the roles of the intended characters, also cater to the taste and aspirations of the audiences, while staying within the framework of the tradition. They perform the acts as per the story from the epics or the legends but simultaneously they incorporate local idioms and popular topics of interest into the drama as well. Interestingly, most of the puppet artistes are themselves good singers who can skillfully render the speech and song of the concerned character. They even play the musical instruments that accompany the puppet shows. Apart from making the puppets act, the puppeteers offer explanations and interpretations of the verses from the religious mythologies and also from the world of legends and history. To be able to interpret authoritatively, the puppeteers need to have a thorough knowledge of the whole range of Hindu mythology and the significance of each god and goddess of the ancient Hindu pantheon along with the nuances behind all those legendary tales[xix].

The use of puppet show as a means of education and communication through the indirect expressions of the puppets gives the puppeteer an opportunity to spread political and religious ideas and also a critique of the same. A puppet show's inherent freedom for improvisation permits reference to present facts and events and a chance to make satirical comments and thus puppets are often represented as bold critics of the socio-political scenario. In Chakiar Koothu of Kerala, the character of vidushaka even made fun of the royalty present in the audience. In such shows, the puppeteers creatively introduce humorous acts through the comic characters while subtly indulging in criticizing the targeted individuals or events. As regarding the status of the puppeteers in earlier times, some were treated with respect as they were attached to some temples or were patronized by a powerful person. In Karnataka during the rule of the Marathas and the Vijayanagara dynasty, the puppeteers acted as spies on the command of the kings who patronized them. However, since majority of them were wandering communities who provide entertainment to the common people through itinerant theatre shows of puppets, they were often viewed with suspicion. They were considered as plunderers or spies who came to entertain and beguile the ordinary people[xx]. The traditional form of puppet art owes a lot to these puppeteers, who have kept it alive through continuous improvisations in order to cater to the taste of the audiences. Puppetry has been a form of informal cultural dissemination besides being a means of entertainment in rural India. Even today it is a popular medium through which knowledge and awareness about social and contemporary issues etc. are disseminated amongst the masses.

Notes

[i]Quoted from the Introduction to *Asian Puppets: Wall of the World*. An Exhibition presented by the UCLA Museum of Cultural History, p. 7.

[ii]For an elaborate analysis of the genesis and origins of puppetry in India and Asia, see the respective Introductions to the aforementioned *Asian Puppets: Wall of the World* and J. Tilakasiri (1968).

[iii]Cited from Asian *Puppets: Wall of the World*. An Exhibition presented by the UCLA Museum of Cultural History, p. 11.

[iv]ibid.

[v]See the Introduction and the chapter on Indian puppets from *Asian Puppets: Wall of the World*. An Exhibition presented by the UCLA Museum of Cultural History, pp. 7-11.

[vi]References to R. Pischel are quoted from J. Tilakasiri (1968).

[vii]For a detailed discussion on the relationship between puppetry and Sanskrit Drama, see J. Tilakasiri (1968).

[viii]Quoted from the 'Concept note' of the brochure entitled *Ramkatha: Ankan, Manchan Aur Vaachan,* published on the occasion of the four-day seminar on 'Ram Katha and Folk Performative Traditions in India' held at IGNCA in March 2008.

[ix]Refer to S.A. Krishnaiah (1987), p. 22

[x]Refer to Venkat Swaminathan (1990).

[xi]Refer to S.A. Krishnaiah (1987), chapter 2.

[xii]Refer to J. Tilakasiri (1968).

[xiii]Refer to G. Venu (1990).

[xiv]We are indebted to Sangeet Natak Akademi's *Putul Yatra: An Exhibition of Indian Puppets* for its extensive survey on the various types of puppet forms in India.

[xv]Refer to S.A. Krishnaiah (1987).

[xvi]For more information, see Jiwan Pani (1990), p. 18.

[xvii]For a detailed discussion, refer to Michael Meshchke (1992).

[xix]Refer to S.A. Krishnaiah (1987).[xvii]Quoted from *Sangeet Natak*. Number-98 (October to December, 1990).

[xx]For more details, see J. Tilakasiri (1968).

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Duryodhana Vadham (Puppet performance)

21 October, 2010, Time 6.30 pm to 7.15 pm

Pava Kathakali (Glove Puppets), Kerala
Natana Kairali Group
Director: G. Venu

In the eighteenth century, under the influence of Kathakali – a popular performing art of Kerala, glove puppeteers began to use costumes and themes from *Attakatha*, the text of Kathakali and gave birth to a new art form known as *Pava Kathakali*. Generally, the height of puppets used in the performance varies from 1 foot to 2 feet. The puppets are carved delicately in wood, and then painted, gilded and decorated with transparent coral and peacock feathers. Under the wooden upper part of the puppet's body, there is a bag concealed by a flowing robe. The puppeteer manipulates the puppet with his fingers. The hands of the puppet are operated with the thumb and middle finger, while the head is controlled by the index finger.

In order to promote the art form, Natana Kairali - a Research and Performing Centre for Traditional Arts was conceived in 1975 by G. Venu to combine research, training and performance in the field of this traditional art form. Under G. Venu's guidance, a group of artistes was chosen and trained in music, manipulation and puppet-making at Natana Kairali. The team comprised traditional puppeteers and artistes, who were trained in this form in the light of the new technological developments by the Natana Kairali institute.

The *Pava Kathakali* team of Natana Kairali performs at IGNCA, '*Duryodhana Vadham*'. It begins with the 'Game of Dice', an episode taken from the Mahabharata in which the Pandavas are defeated. The Pandavas vow to take revenge against the Kauravas. The play develops with the help of subsequent incidents that led to the battle of Kurukshetra and the eventual slaying of Duryodhana at the hands of Bhima.

Cast and Crew:

G. Venu

Ravi Gopalan Nair

K. Sreenivasan

K. V. Ramakrishnan

K.C. Ramakrishnan

Kalanilayam Ramakrishnan

Kalanilayam Unnikrishnan

Kalanilayam Haridas

Seraikela Chhau/Chho (Mask performance)

21 October, 2010, Time 7.20 pm to 8 pm

Mask Performance, Jharkhand
Acharya Chhau Nrutya Bichitra Group
Coordinator: Shashadhar Archarya

The word *chhau* refers to *chhaya*, which means 'shadow'. The thematic content of the compositions are mostly abstract and are steeped in symbolism. *Chhau* is different from other Indian classical dance forms, primarily in its treatment of space and in its method of communicating the emotions. The dancer executes movements thrusting the body upwards away from gravity. Spiral turns executed in the air, jumps and extended leg movements carry the dancer through choreographic patterns across the performing space. Another important feature of *Seraikela Chhau* is the complete absence of *vachikabhinaya* by means of vocal support and *mukhabhinaya*, as the face is completely concealed by the mask. Thus the emoting is done kinesthetically through body movements. *Mukhota* or masks are an integral part of this dance style and the art of making the mask is itself highly evolved. There are traditional families that specialize in this art. Working together with choreographers and dancers and only after a detailed study of the characters they create the masks. A mask depicts only the essence of a particular character but in combination with the movements of the dancer, the mask becomes extremely animated. Every move of the body or tilt of the face imparts to the mask a whole range of expressions. When worn, the masks lead the dancer through a series of meditative experiences. Breathing through the masks, the dancer is depicted to undergo a total negation of the self and a complete transformation into the character. This overwhelming feeling makes it an extraordinary experience for both the dancer and the spectator.

The themes of the compositions are inspired from nature, mythology and history. The rhythmic accompaniment is provided by traditional drums like *nagada*, a huge kettle drum and *dhol*, a cylindrical drum. The melody is provided by the *shenai*, reed pipes and bamboo flute. The compositions are classical, based on ragas that enhance the mood of the character. Every year in the spring, people of Seraikela celebrate the *Chaitra-Parva* and through dance, evoke the blessings of Kali, the Mother Goddess and *Ardhanarishwar* (half female - half male manifestation of Lord Shiva).

In this event, Acharya Chhau Nrutya Bichitra, one of the leading centres of Chhau in the country, is staging a performance consisting of ten episodes namely, *Jatra Ghat,* the musical offering marking the beginning of the performance; *Ratri,* a composition inspired by the 'ratri sukta' of the Rig Veda celebrating the night as a goddess; *Hansa,* where the dancer embodies a majestic swan; *Radhakrishna,* depicting the eternal love of Radha and Krishna; *Garuda Vasuki,* a composition representing the conflict between Garuda and Vasuki; *Chandrabhaga,* a tragic tale of the beautiful Moon maiden pursued by the Sun god; *Mayura,* a portrayal of the extraordinary beauty of the peacock; *Nabik,* an allegorical representation of the journey of life; *Sagar,* a composition about the numerous aspects of the sea; and finally *Phulobasant*, which illustrates the blossoming of love in spring by the delicately choreographed duet between the season and a flower.

Cast and Crew:

Shashadhar Archarya
Sukant Kumar Akhara
Brijendra Pattanayak
Satish Kumar Modak
Pulkit Gupta
Omprakash Solanki
Amit Saxsena
Bishwanath Kumbhakar
Govind Mahato
Sapan Kumar Acharya
Bhivishan Mahato
Siddhswar Daroga
Ranjit Akhara
Vikas Babu
Himansu Dutt

Kalpataru - The Wishing Tree (Puppet performance)
22 October, 2010, Time 6.30 pm to 7.15 pm

The Ishara Puppet Theatre Trust, New Delhi
Director: Dadi D. Pudumjee

How do we define puppet theatre today? Is it just the difference between inanimate and animate or is it something far more profound?

The urge to create and give life to objects is as old as mankind and generations have used it both to educate and entertain. In most countries, one will find some forms of puppetry, traditional or modern, both however speaking the same language and the latter a transition of the former. India has existing puppet theatre traditions in all its known techniques namely string, rod, shadow and glove in the states of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. The modern centres exist mostly in the cities of Kolkata, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Hyderabad and Cochin.

Dadi Pudumjee's style and that of the Ishara Puppet Theatre Trust have always been evolving, borrowing from other art forms – dance, theatre, music, poetry and visual arts. Dadi leans more on expression using simple materials, than technical extravaganza. He works with puppets that range from being a foot high to 14 feet tall, breaking the scale, paired with actors and dancers using the whole stage and not just a puppet booth.

In *Kalpataru* the urge to shed the preconceived ideas of puppetry takes over and through abstract exercises with objects, shadow puppets, figures and actors, it creates a performance on nature and life, a visual show without many words. This however, is the essence of puppetry, bringing forms alive, made from objects as simple as paper cut outs, wire, cloth, sand etc and creating larger than life images of creation, nostalgia and longing. The show appeals both to children and adults and each see in it a reflection of things possibly lost, of playful abundance and a comment on our present directions.

The play *Kalpataru* is based on *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein. The Ishara Puppet Theatre interprets this famous story through shadow images, puppets, actors and music. A tale built around the relationship between a boy and his friend, a tree, *Kalpataru* is a story of growing up, of want, the need for affection, one's selfishness and above all the grace in giving.

"Look around you and tread carefully my friend.

For in the true nature of things, if we rightly consider, every green tree is far more glorious than if it were made of gold and silver."

- Martin Luther.

About the Director

Dadi Pudumjee is the Managing Trustee and Artistic Director of The Ishara Puppet Theatre Trust. He is also the President of Union Internationale de la Marrionette (UNIMA) (World Puppet Organisation).

Born in Pune, Dadi started his career in puppetry there as a hobby; later he received further training from the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad and also under late Meher R. Contractor at the Darpana Academy of Performing Arts. In 1980, he set up the Sutradhar Puppet Theatre at the Shri Ram Centre for Art and Culture, New Delhi, India's first contemporary puppet theatre repertory company and was its Artistic Director till 1986. Dadi set up the Ishara Puppet Theatre, in 1986, which is one of India's leading modern puppet theatre groups, working with puppets, actors and dancers, creating a style which is a synthesis between the East and the West. He was awarded by Sangeet Natak Academy, the National Award, for his work on puppetry. Besides directing performances for Ishara, Dadi conducts workshops on puppetry and allied arts for various agencies, schools and institutions in India and abroad.

Cast and Crew:

Puppeters:

Md Shameem
Pawan Waghmare
Vivek Kumar
Kumari Yadav
Abhishek Kumar.
Puppets made by:
Md Shameem
Pawan Waghmare
Vivek Kumar
Kumari Yadav
Abhishek Kumar.

Animal puppets:

Tolu Bommalatta puppets, Andhra Pradesh.

Design and Direction: Dadi Pudumjee.

Music:
Phillipe Glass
Wim Mertens
Michael Nyman
Leon Muraglia
Sawan Dutta
Joaquin Rodrigo

Voice over: Inder Misra.

Hindi Adaptation: Sohail Hashmi

Special thanks to:

Delna Dastur, Mehul Sahai, Milind Srivastava and the entire Ishara puppet group.

Ramman (Mask performance)

22 October, 2010, Time 7.20 pm to 8 pm

Mask Performance, Uttarakhand
Saloor Dungra Group
Coordinator: Dr. Kushal Singh Bhandari

Ramman is a ritual performance tradition of Garhwal in Uttarakhand. One can see the amalgamation of myriad texts spread over time and over a wide range of values. If one is to delineate even five texts incorporated into the overall framework of *Ramman*, one can talk of the inbuilt Ramkatha structure, the use of mask tradition, the local narratives of characters such as the Baniya-banyain, Mwar-mwarin, the historical figures from the battle between Gurkhas and the Garhwalis, known as Maal-nritya, the invocations of Ganesh, Kalinki, Bur deva and the deity of the local chieftains, the Kathyuri kings – Narsingh devta. The Ramkatha element is pervasive; it appears as a *sutradhar* element in the whole performance, as though to link the various motley elements those are part of the whole text. The Ramkatha element is rendered through the process of Jagar singing. Jagars are Garhwali lores and legends which are rendered in the form of folk songs and they are unique to different occasions. It is a prevalent bardic tradition in this part of the country. The masked performances form a very intrinsic part of the *Ramman* performance.

In a *Ramman* performance, the most apparent variance is that, in all the villages where *Ramman* is performed, nowhere does it end with the war, in which Rama kills Ravana and thus establishes the rule of good over evil. The festival culminates with the dance of the Bhumiyal devta, the local deity who is the protector of fields and livestock. A thick mane of Yak hair perched on the top of a pole, swaying wildly against the backdrop of icy mountains, is an awe-inspiring view. Also at the conclusion, there is a dance of Narsingh devta, who is represented through a mask weighing around 20 kilograms. Narsingh dances only once and the two gods never dance together or come face to face with each other. This reinforces the idea of a merger of various traditions and in this case, it was clearly decided that prime deities of the two traditions will have their positions intact in the pantheon. The masks play a very important role in representation and also give an idea of the antiquity of the tradition, which may have existed before the Ramkatha narrative and was later assimilated into the tradition. The unique feature about the masks in this tradition is that, they are worn over the head or rather carried over the head and not worn on the face. The characters of Ram, Lakshman, Sita and Hanuman wear no masks. This is probably because the mask traditions had been in existence for centuries prior to the introduction of the Ramkatha element, as stated above. The feature of Ramkatha came into being only in the tenth century. The people of this region have kept the various aspects of the tradition separate.

Cast and Crew:

Dr. Kushal Singh Bhandari
Jagdish Singh Chauhan
Gabar Singh Bhatt
Bharat Singh Rawat
Bharat Singh Bhandari
Gopal Singh Chauhan
Sain Singh Bhandari
Dilbar Singh
Dharm Singh Panwar
Gopal Singh Panwar
Birendra Singh Panwar
Rajendra Singh
Sandeep Singh
Pankaj Kunwar
Pradeep Bisht
Manoj Chauhan
Devendra Singh
Raghubir Singh Kunwar
Tajbar Kunwar
Sudheer Kunwar
Ravi
Devendra Singh Kunwar
Dinesh Singh Negi
Matwar Singh Negi
S. S. Rawat
Puran Singh Bhandari
Vijay Kunwar
Dinesh Singh
Surendra Singh
Akshay Pratap Singh
R. S. Rawat
Hukum Das
Garib Das
Chaman Lal
Dalip Lal

Amar Singh Rathore (Puppet performance)
23 October, 2010, Time 6.30 pm to 7.15 pm

Kathputli ka Khel (String Puppets Performance), Rajasthan
Aakaar Puppet Theatre
Director: Puran Bhat

The vernacular term used for wooden puppets in Rajasthan is *kathputli.* The local legends of Rajasthan are rendered through these puppets and traditionally manipulated by the community of *nats* or *bhats.* The stories mostly revolve around the exploits of the local heroes. The popular legend of Amar Singh Rathore, historically the ruler of Nagaur in the seventeenth century, is being enacted by a puppet team based in Delhi under the guidance of Puran Bhat. Young puppeteers from Shadipur depot who had left their traditional profession of puppetry and had started working in unorganized sectors were reintroduced to their art by Puran Bhat.

Amar Singh Rathore is a folk epic that has long been told by the *bhats* of Rajasthan through *kathputli* and other media as well. The eponymous hero is a seventeenth century Rajput warrior from Nagaur who served under a Mughal emperor, usually identified as either Akbar or his grandson Shahjahan. The saga is divided into many episodes during the performance.

The performers use *kathputlis*, generally upto 60 centimeters tall which have torsos, heads and headgear carved largely from mango wood and have large stylized, painted eyes. The bodies of the puppets are made of cloth and stuffed rag; they are colourfully costumed in Rajasthani style, seen in medieval Rajasthani paintings, especially in the *phad* style of paintings.

New puppets were made, manipulation techniques were learnt and texts were recreated. Once again, many of the lost characters of entertainment and history from the play *Amar Singh Rathore* have been reincorporated in the performance.

Akhyan
A Celebration of Masks, Puppets & Picture Showmen Traditions of India
Performances

Cast and Crew:

Akshay Bhat
Ravi BhatVikram Bhat
Boggi Ram Bhat
Birju Bhat
Raju Bhat
Pawan Bhat
Toni Bhat
Ladu Bhat
Shambhu Bhat
Anil Bhat
Guddi Bhat (singer)
Ranjeet Bhat (singer)
Mahender Bhat (dholak)
Puran Bhat

Purulia Chhau/Chho (Mask performance)

23 October, 2010, Time 7.20 pm to 8 pm

Mask Dance, West Bengal
Binapani Rupchand Chhau Dance Group
Coordinator: Dilip Mahato

Emerging from martial practice, the *Purulia Chho* is a vigorous theatrical form that draws its themes from the two great Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Very brief and simple rituals precede this dance, which is performed in front of a Shiva temple or the village square. Masks and elaborate headgears are the ornamental apparels of the *Chho* dancers. The dance is believed to date back over a century, though the specific date of its origin cannot be definitely ascertained. Since its inception, the members of the Mahato, Kurmi, Bhumija, Deowa, Bhuama and Dom communities have sustained this dance form. The *Purulia Chho* dance has been influenced by many dances of the region, like the Nata Jawaid Dance, the Mahi Dance and the Nachni Dance. Even two relatively sophisticated dance forms like the Jhumur and Bhadra Jhumur have influenced the *Chho* in its tune and rhythm. The musical accompaniments to *Chho* include *dhol*, *dhamsa* and *shenai*. A distinctive feature of this dance is the acrobatic use of the body and the intricately crafted masks worn by the dancers. Powerful movements, immense concentration and release of energy are the other features of this dance. Over the years, the dance has undergone evolution in form, stage craft, lighting and the use of musical instruments.

The masks help the dancers to portray different characters. There are masks depicting particular gods and goddesses, demons and monsters. There are also interesting masks for different animals like the lion, tiger, bear, monkey and so on. These finely-crafted masks are made by the painter-artistes of the district. With the face covered by a mask, it is left to the dancers to emote using their bodies. It is therefore, the movements and postures that serve both to portray emotions and make the dance lively. For this event, the *Purulia Chho* performance is being displayed by four presentations, namely, *'Sumbha Nisumbha Bodh'*, *'Abhimanyu Bodh'*, *'Sita Swayamvar'* and *'Ravan Bodh'*.

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Performances

Cast and Crew:

Dilip Mahato
Prafulla Mahato
Sibu Mahato
Balaram Mahato
Kartik Mahato
Lakikant Mahato
Naren Mahato
Sontosh Kumhar
Phalguni Kumhar
Janardan Kumhar
Shankar Singh Mura

Sundara Kanda (Puppet performance)
24 October, 2010, Time 6.30 pm to 7.15 pm

Tolu Bommalatta (Leather Puppets), Andhra Pradesh
Anjaneyulu Shadow Puppet Theatre
Director: Hanumant Rao

Tolu Bommalatta is a form of shadow puppet theatre, which uses leather puppets. Traditionally, the performance is held during the Shivaratri festival outside Shiva temples for nine consecutive nights. The dramatic effects are achieved by contrast and colors, variations in size and striking one puppet against the other in battle scenes.

The Andhra shadow puppets, measuring 1.2 to 1.8 meters, are usually made from goat hide. After making it translucent, it is cut into figures, incised and coloured with dyes. All the puppets are in profile except for the ten headed Ravan, who faces frontally. Andhra puppets are joined at the head, neck, shoulders, elbows and wrists. The central bamboo stick for the head and the two sticks attached to the hands of the puppet are used for manipulation by the puppeteers.

For this event, the artistes are going to present '*Sundara Kanda*', which is a chapter in *Ram-Charit-Manas*, by Goswami Tulsidas. It commences with Hanuman's departure for Lanka in search of Sita and ends with Rama and his army's preparation to reach Lanka across the sea. Hanuman is reminded by Jambhavan of his great powers that Hanuman had forgotten due to a curse. Jambhavan also exhorts Hanuman to undertake the crossing of the mighty ocean to search for Sita who had been abducted by Ravana.

The entire sequence is being monitored by Lord Shiva and Bhavani. In '*Sundara Kanda*', everything ends in a positive and bright note. Hanuman finds Sita, ultimately leading to her rescue from the clutches of Ravana. Vibhisana is liberated from evil surroundings and he is accepted in Rama's camp. Rama learns the secret of crossing the sea from the sea god.

Cast and Crew:

Hanumant Rao

Chandrashekhar

S. Anjannailu

Ganesh

Lakshmi

Nandini

Ananda

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Mahishasuran Vadham (Mask performance)

24 October, 2010, Time 7.20 pm to 8 pm

Kaliattam
Mask Performance, Tamil Nadu
Kalaimamani Muthukumar Kalai Kuzhu
Coordinator: Peter Arockia Raj

Kaliattam is a mask performance of Tamil Nadu which is generally performed during Dussehra and also in the annual worshipping celebration of folk goddesses. The performance of *Kaliattam* consists of several mythical characters like Pachchai Kali, Pavazha Kali, Narasimman, Shiva, Sakthi and Asuran. The performance is accompanied by Naiyandi Melam - a musical form consisting of a reed pipe and percussion instruments like Thavil, Pampai and Urumi. The performers don colourful masks of the mythical characters and enact the episode of killing the demon Mahishasuran.

Cast and Crew:

Peter Arockia Raj
Muthu Kumar S
Sadullah Khan
Balakrishnan
Barani Kumar
Asaithambi
Suresh
Ramesh
Agathian

Naiyandi Melam Team List (Music)

Bright (Team leader)
Munia Samy
Thirumalayandi
Manikandan
Murugesan

Taming of the Wild (Puppet performance)
25 October, 2010, Time 6.30 pm to 7.15 pm

Dolls Theatre, West Bengal
Director: Sudip Gupta

Dolls Theatre was established in 1990 in Kolkata, by a group of young artists from different backgrounds in the visual and performing arts. Over the past two decades, Dolls Theatre has earned a reputation for beautifully executed and thought-provoking productions. The group has presented many plays nationally and internationally. The content of their productions are rooted in the mutual awareness and relationship of Mankind and Nature.

Using the medium of modern puppet theatre the puppeteers endeavor to create an elementary, generally understandable visual language. The dramatization of the contents is done by non-verbal means; by precise movement of the puppets, by playing with form and colour and by loud and soft sound effects. For this event, the theatre group is staging a play entitled *Taming of the Wild*, consisting of four episodes namely, '*The World Within*', '*Floral Tribute*', '*Movements in Wilderness*' and '*Call of the Wild*'.

Cast and Crew:

Sudip Gupta
Surajit Dey
Pijush Purokait
Kaushik Das
Mandira Banerjee
Soumi Banerjee
Soumen Chakrobarty
Barun Kar
Nital Hembrem.

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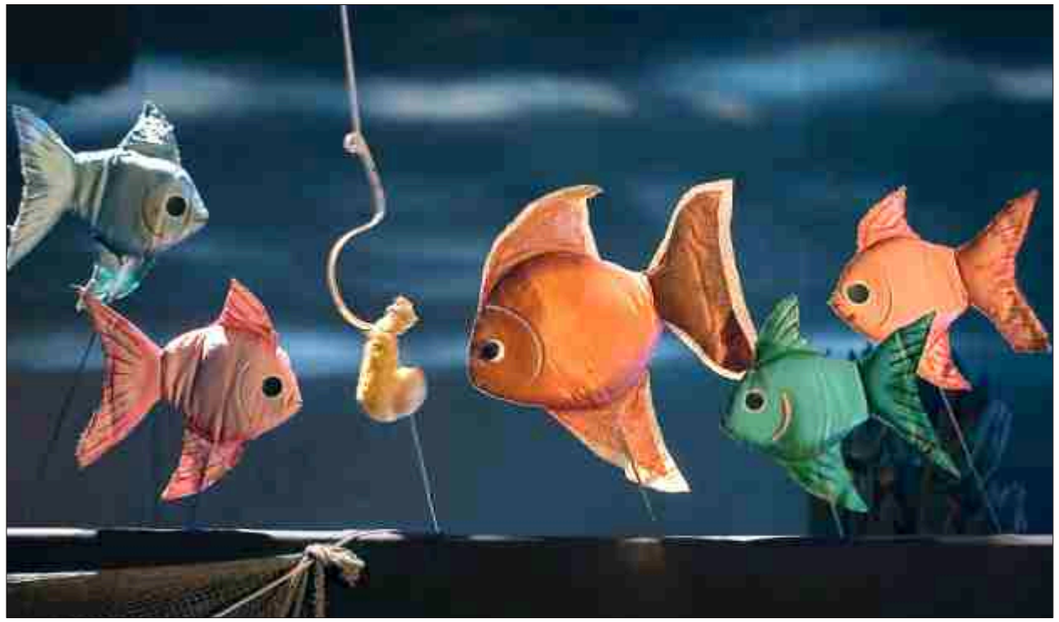

Gulikan and Pottan Theyyam (Mask performance)
25 October, 2010,Time 7.20 pm to 8 pm

Mask Performance, Kerala
Folkland
Coordinator: Dr. V. Jayarajan

Theyyam is a ritual dance of Kerala, prevalent in the northern districts such as Kannur and Kasargod. The word theyyam refers to daivam, which means or god. Theyyam is one of the most outstanding folk art forms of Kerala and it is performed in houses, open places, temples, shrines, kavus (sacred groves) and tharavads (ancestral houses). Theyyam may represent any of the following characters: a divine being, or a mythological character, or an ancestor, or an animal, or a serpent or a heroic character each with its distinct shape, form and story of origin. The hood, head dress, face painting, breast plate, bracelets, garlands and fabric of attire of each Theyyam is distinct and meticulously crafted according to the character presented. The performers are mainly from the Vannan, Malayan, Pulayan, Velan, Mavilan and Koppalan communities. A Theyyam recital begins with the invocation followed by the tale narrated by a song called thottam paattu. During the performance one sees that the Theyyam is identified with the particular deity as long as the mudi irakku is performed and the headgear is removed. It is imperative that the Velaattam and the Theyyam are performed by the same person, then only can the impersonator get into the mood and develop the requisite spirit of the character, be it classical, mythological or legendary. In brief, we see the performer and the performance, the observer and the observed all lose their separateness or identity and merge to be one single unit.

Cast and Crew:

Dr. V. Jayarajan
Sunil Panikker A
K.V. Madhu
Shinojkumar M.P
Shyju A
Shyju K.V
Manoj M.V
Dileep Kumar
Kunhikannan P
Dineshan M
Reghuthaman K.P
M .K. Rajesh
Babu Panikker M
Mahesh M.V
Sureshan

Choodamani - Lankadahana (Puppet performance)

26 October, 2010, Time 6.30 pm to 7.15 pm

Yakshagana (String Puppets), Karnataka
Sri Ganesha Yakshagana Gombeyata Mandali
Director: Bhaskar Kogga Kamath

Yakshagana is a musical dance drama popular in the coastal and Malenadu regions of Karnataka. It is popular in the districts of Uttara Kannada, Udupi, Dakshina Kannada, Shimoga and Kasaragod in Karnataka. It is also known as *Aataā* in both Kannada and Tulu, meaning 'play'. *Yakshagana* literally means the song (*gana*) of the Yaksha, described as an exotic tribe in Sanskrit epics.

Yakshagana consists of a *himmela* (group of background musicians) and a *mummela* (dance and dialogue group) which together perform a *Yakshagana Prasanga*. The music is based on pre-*Karnataka Sangeetha Ragas*, characterized by melodic patterns called *mattu* and *Yakshagana Tala*. *Yakshagana Talas* are believed to be based on the groves which later have evolved into *Karnataka Sangeetha* Talas. Both *Yakshagana Raga* and *Yakshagana Tala* have folk influence.

This art form of Yakshagana in string puppetry was founded by three brothers Laxman, Narasimha and Manjappa Kamath, three centuries ago at Uppinakudru, a small village of Kundapura Taluk. Devanna Padmanabha Kamath, the grandson of Laxman Kamath, pursued this profession with missionary zeal. Devanna Kamath got national recognition by winning National Award in 1966 for the same. After him, his son Guru Sri Kogga Kamath took over the responsibility and trained many youngsters in this art form. K. S. Upadhyaya and his wife Dr. Leela Upadhyaya are credited for having popularized this art form internationally. Kogga Kamath won National Award in 1980, State Award in 1986 and Tulsi Samman in 1995.

The play '*Choodamani – Lankadahana*' is based on an episode taken from the Ramayana where Hanuman sets Lanka ablaze. The monkey king Sugreeva summons an audience at Kishkinda. This is followed by the quest for Sita by a batch of monkeys. The bird king Sampathi informs them that Sita has been abducted by Ravana. Hanuman at once springs across the sea towards Lanka. Taking clues from a heavenly voice, Hanuman traces out Sita in Ashoka Vana. He approaches her and informs her about Rama. As a token of proof, he accepts a *choodamani* from her to be handed over to Rama. Thereafter, Hanuman unleashes his mischief in Ashoka Vana and is soon captured by Indrajeet. Angry Ravana orders to set fire to Hanuman's tail. With the fire, Hanuman flies over Lanka and sets it ablaze.

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Performances

Cast and Crew:

Bhaskar Kogga Kamath
M. Rathnakara Pai
Shankaranarayana Shanubhogue
Mahabaleshwara Shet
Kumara Moga Veera
Narayana Billava
Rama Balegar
Manjunatha Mypadi
Nagesh Pai
Vishwanatha Shanubhogue
Shankara Billava
Chandra Devadiga
Prabha Kar Achary
Damodar Prabhu

Yak Dance (Mask performance)
26 October, 2010, Time 7.20 pm to 8 pm

Mask Performance, Sikkim
Singhi Chham Group
Coordinator: R.D. Lepcha

High in the mountains, the Sikkimese herdsman's best friend on the ragged slopes is the yak. The yak is his sole means of transportation, besides providing him with milk and meat for sustenance during the long winter months. Its rich mane is woven into cloth that protects him from the biting cold; its milk is churned into cheese and butter and its fur is woven into blankets. This dance depicts the movements of the yak and the simple lifestyle of the herdsmen of the mountains. The dancers don the costume and mask of the yak and tune their steps to traditional songs and instrumental music. The main purpose of this dance is to propitiate the deity, kill the evil king and protect the people from the wrath of natural calamities, diseases and epidemics and ensure health, happiness and prosperity for the people of the area. *Yak Dance* portrays the unusual experience of a man driven out of his home by his father, who comes across a yak. Two men holding a yak head with elaborate costumes, act as a yak. The dance revolves around other animals as well, such as deer, lion, peacock and a mock cockfight.

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Cast and Crew:

R. D. Lepcha
Yangchok Lachenpa
Palzor Lachungpa
Sonam Wangyal
T. Gyaltsen
Surbir Rasaily
Jala Bhutia
Karma Tsh. Lepcha
Karma Lepcha
Tashi Lepcha
Arun Raj
Ananda Manger
Phurjang Lepcha
Zigmee Bhutia
Tashi Bhutia

Kamba Ramayanam (Puppet performance)
27 October, 2010, Time 6.30 pm to 7.15 pm

Tholpava Koothu (Shadow Puppets), Kerala
Krishnankutty Pulavar Memorial Tholpava Koothu & Puppet Centre
Director: Ramachandra Pulavar

Tholpava Koothu is considered to be an ancient art form, dedicated to goddess Bhagavathi, worshiped by the Hindu community of Kerala as the Mother Goddess. It is performed during the months of January to May at the specially constructed theatre called *koothu madam* in front of the *Bhagavati* temple. The puppet plays are based on selected verses from the famous Tamil epic, *Kambar Ramayana*. The language used is a dialect of Tamil with an admixture of Sanskrit and Malayalam words.

The puppets are made of deer skin and are held by a thin stick in one hand, while the limbs are manipulated by a thinner stick held in another hand of the puppeteer. About 160 puppets are used for the complete version of the epic. The screen is illuminated by 21 lighted lamps, made out of coconut shelves, filled with coconut oil, provided with cotton wicks and placed equidistant from each other on the *vilakku-madam* (wooden beam) behind the curtain. Ezhupara, a cylindrical drum made out of jack-fruit wood and covered with calf-skin on both ends, Ilathalam (cymbals), Shankha (conch), Chenda and Maddalam (drums), Chengila (gong) and Kurum-kuzhal (a short pipe) are the musical instruments accompanying the performance.

In Kerala, *Tholpava Koothu* is preserved as a family tradition by the Pulavars. The name Pulavar itself is a title bestowed on such a person who has gone through an intensive training in puppetry and puppet making that includes an in-depth knowledge of Tamil literature and especially the epic. In order to promote this art-form, Krishnankutty Pulavar Tholpava Koothu and Puppet Centre was established by the renowned *Tholpava Koothu* artiste Late Guru Krishnan Kutty Pulavar at Koonathara. The Koonathara troupe has started to explore the aesthetics of the art form outside its ritualistic context by introducing new plays and new characters based on contemporary issues and performed outside the *koothu madam*.

Cast and Crew:

K.K.Ramachandra Pulavar
K.Rajeev
K.Rajitha
K.Viswanatha Pulavar
K.Lakshmmana Pulavar
K.N.Somasundran
K.S.Sivarajan
T.P.Ramachandran

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Performances

Aji Lhamu: Buddhist Ramayana (Mask performance)
27 October, 2010, Time 7.20 pm to 8 pm

Mask Performance, Arunachal Pradesh
Coordinator: Ajoy Sidasow

Aji Lhamu dance is popular among the Monpas and Sherdukpen communities of Tawang and West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh. This dance is generally performed at the Gompa during the celebration of Chhokar festival. Through this dance drama, the Tibetan version of the Ramayana is depicted. Five mythical characters dance in front of the evil spirit in order to distract his attention away from the people who are building a bridge. When the bridge is finally constructed, men cross over to the other side and are free from evil interferences.

Cast and Crew:

Ajoy Sidasow
Dadu Sidasowa
Tsering Dorjee Megaji
Rinchin Wangdi Dingla
Rinchi Norbu Megeji
Dorjee Khandu Sinchaji
Sange Tsering Karma
Tsering Dorjee Megaji
Pema Khandu Sinchali
Tashi Dorjee Megeji
Nima Tsering Thongchi
Phunchu Dorjee Megeji
Kejang Phunchu Thongchi
Dorjee Dingla
Rinchin Khandu Dingla
Netan Dorjee Thongchi
Kejang Dorjee Thongdok
Tashi Dorjee Dingla

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Performances

Arannyer Rodan - Crying of the Forest (Puppet performance)
28 October, 2010, Time 6.30 pm to 7.15 pm

Daanger Putul Naach (Rod Puppets), West Bengal
Satya Narayan Putul Natya Sanstha
Director: Nirapada Mondal

The tradition of rod puppet performance in Bengal is known as *Daanger Putul Naach*. The themes of this performance are derived from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Puranas and also from the *jatras*. The *Putul Naach* (Puppet dance) performances are influenced by the *jatra* style and use both dialogues and operatic singing as performative devices. As the musicians play their drums, cymbals and flutes, an artiste sings a song and makes the puppets dance to reflect the mood of the song. Rod puppets and string puppets are used to present *palagan* or 'narrative plays', usually based on the stories of Radha-Krishna and Ram-Sita.

Satya Narayan Putul Natya Sanstha is a popular troupe in West Bengal performing rod puppet show through many generations. This puppet theatre was established by Late Kangal Ch. Mondal. The present director of the troupe is his son Nirapada Mondal.

The episode of '*Arannyer Rodan' (Crying of the Forest)* is being performed for this event. The play depicts the importance of maintaining ecological balance. It portrays some evil characters that are shown to be continuously destroying the forest by felling trees and killing birds and animals for profit-making. At the end, the various animals of the forest unite to stand against those villains and thus they protect the environment.

Cast and Crew:

Provanjan Bairagi
Krishnapada Mondal
Bishnupada Mondal
Murari Mohan Mondal
Swapan Kumar Naskar
Gautam Halder
Gour Bairagi
Pradip Bairagi
Susanta Bairagi.

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Performances

Ram Vijaya (Mask performance)
28 October, 2010, Time 7.20 pm to 8 pm

Ankiya Naat
Jakhalabandha, Nagaon
Coordinator: Hiroprasad Mahanta

Ankiya Naat is the creation of Sankaradeva (1449-1568 A.D.), the father of Assamese Vaishnavism and its foremost preceptor. It blends religious philosophy with indigenous forms of folk entertainment and techniques of performance derived from the classical tradition of Sanskrit drama. *Ankiya Naat* is traditionally performed in the prayer hall called *namghar* with the musicians and actors facing the *manikut* (the altar of the deity). The positioning of the players in relation to the *manikut* suggests that the play is being performed as an offering to the deity who is the most honoured spectator.

The battle scene between Rama and the demon brothers of Ravana, King of Lanka is one of the most exhilarating moments for a viewer in an *Ankiya Naat*. Like so many other forms of traditional theatre in India, the visual appeal of *Ankiya Naat* lies in the costumes, masks, effigies and props rather than in the virtually nonexistent scenery.

Ankiya Naat is usually presented on special occasions during the year, such as Krishna Janmasthami, Sankaradeva's birthday or on the birthday of some distinguished local preceptors. Other auspicious occasions for dramatic performances are at the full moon day or at any time between harvesting and planting seasons (roughly mid-January to mid-April), when the villagers are relatively free from agricultural work and can take the time to relax and participate in devotional celebrations.

The *Ankiya Naat* presented here is entitled '*Sri Rama Vijaya Nataka*' which is based on the Ramayana, 'Bala Kanda': Chapters 16-72. It dramatizes the event leading to the arrival of Vishvamitra and the two princes Rama and Lakshmana at Mithila. Janaka has asked his minister Manimat to arrange for the ceremony of *svayamvara* and invite the kings, who have been camping in the capital with the purpose of trying their luck at the *svayamvara*. The kings, Satadhanu, Chandraketu, Puranjaya and Kumudaksa attempt to raise Hara's bow but fail. Now at Vishvamitra's behest, Rama takes up the bow 'as if it were a garland of flowers' and eventually, breaks it into two halves to win Sita's hand in marriage.

Cast and Crew:

Hiroprasad Mahanta
Birinchi Mahanta
Bipul Sarma
Achyut Saikia
Gautam Phukan
Nripen Mahanta
Tarun Kr. Mandal
Tarun Muktiar
Pallab Bhuyan
Prabin Bhuyan
Mohit Bhuyan
Swaruj Kalita
Pradip Bora
Dhanti Bora
Kunjan Mohan Sarmah
Lakhi Saikia
Ankita Mahanta
Ruprekha Bhuyan
Seemarekha Hazarika
Mousumi Mahanta

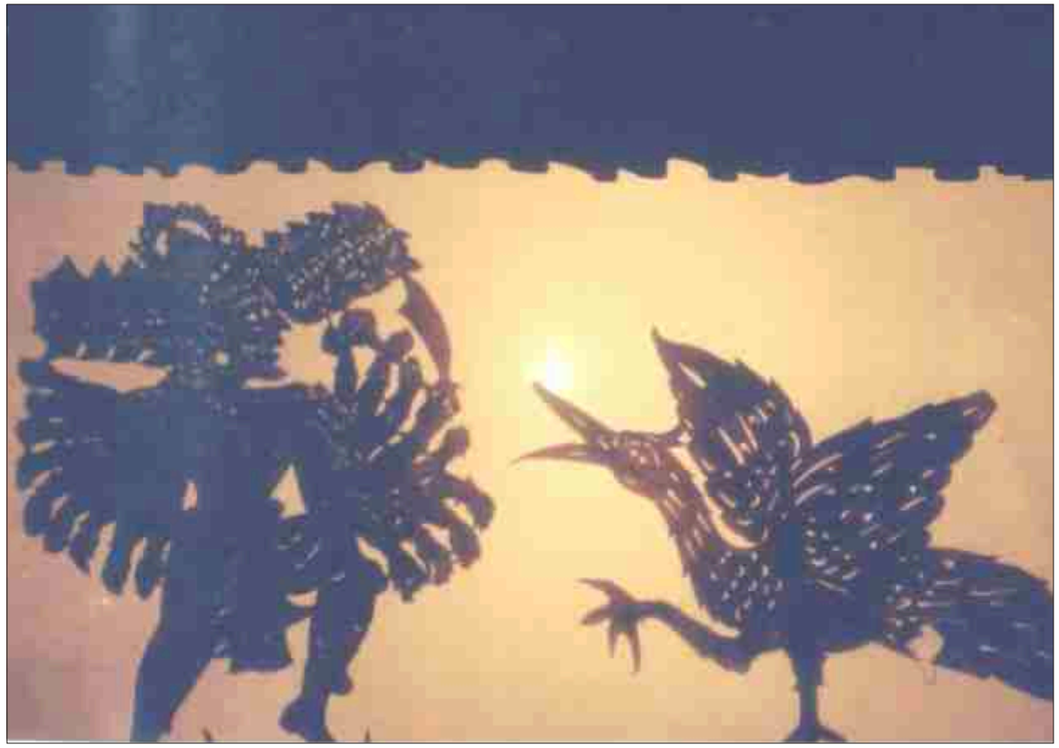
Ramayana (Puppet performance)
29 October, 2010, Time 6.30 pm to 7.15 pm

Ravan Chhaya (Shadow Puppets), Orissa
Ravan-Chhaya Natya Sansad
Director: Khageswar Pradhan

Ravan Chhaya is the shadow-puppet theatre of Orissa. *Ravan Chhaya* means the shadow of Ravan, who is often equated with evil. Accompanied by Khanjani (a type of tambourine) and cymbals, the musicians sing standing in front of the screen. Though most of the puppet figures are made from deer skin, those of demonic characters are made from stag skin. Each puppet is fixed with a thin stick of bamboo for manipulation from behind the white curtain. The light is provided by a large earthen lamp fed with castor oil.

The traditional performers of *Ravan Chhaya* are from the community of *bhats* who received the patronage of the local rajas of Pallahara in shape of land grants. This art-form has been kept alive by Kathinanda Das and his seniormost disciple Kolha Charan Sahu through the institute Ravan-Chhaya Natya Sansad. The Sansad, a registered cultural society has devoted itself for the preservation and promotion of this rare art form. It maintains a full repertory group of performances and imparts training to youngsters in puppet-making, manipulation technique and music. The repertory group now performs with two sets of puppets, the first which are designed and cut according to the old traditional style and the second set designed and cut on the model of traditional *pata* painting of Puri.

The performance is based on the Ramayana. It begins with Ganesh Puja, Saraswati Puja and Shree Ram Puja. The main story starts from 'Ayodhya Kanda', showing the 'Taraka badh' episode. Then the 'Aranyaka Kanda' depicts the 'Maricha badh' episode and the luring of Sita out of the *Laxman rekha* and her abduction by Ravana. The 'Kiskindhya Kanda' depicts Hanuman's search for abducted Sita. Hanuman flies over the ocean and finds her captivated in Asoka Vatika. He introduces himself to Sita with Rama's ring and *mathamani.* In the concluding episodes Laxman kills Indrajeet, Rama kills Ravana and they return to Ayodhya by Pushpak Vimana.



Cast and Crew:

Khageswar Pradhan
Bhimsen Pradhan
Sudarsan Pradhan
Sibaprasad Das .
Prafulla Kumar Sahoo
Khageswar Sahoo
Hemanta Kumar Sahu
Mahendra Kumar Sahoo

Syamantaka Harana Nataka (Mask performance)

29 October, 2010, Time 7.20 pm to 8 pm

Mukha Bhaona
Khatpar Sattra, Sivasagar
Coordinator: Reba Kanta Mahanta

Mukha Bhaona is a theatrical form of Assam, conceptualized and nurtured by the 16th century Vaishnavite saint-reformer Srimanta Sankardeva. *Mukha Bhaona* has a theme, derived either from the epics or from the writings of Sankardeva. Masks, however, are not used by all the characters of the show. While the *gayon* sings, the *bayon* plays the *khul*, the *sutradhar* explains the meaning of the *bhaona* to the audience. Only the *bhaorias* adorn the masks.

A traditional *Mukha Bhaona* could have as many as 30 characters performing diverse roles. It could take about 7 hours for the show to be complete. The masks used are not replicas of the prescribed models. The artist works in accordance with his own ideas on the characters from the epics or Sankardeva's works. The coloured mask, made of bamboo, cloth and a paste, may be reused several times with necessary repairs. *Mukha Bhaona* is performed on a regular basis at two places in Assam — Khatpar Sattra in Sivasagar and Samuguri Sattra in Majuli.

As a part of this event, a *Mukha Bhaona* entitled '*Syamantaka Harana Nataka*' is being performed, which is about Lord Krishna and his search for the Syamantaka Mani, which was worn by Prasanna, brother of Satrajit, the king of Dwaraka. Prasanna wore it around his neck when he went on a hunting expedition and was killed by a lion. Satrajit falsely accused Krishna of having murdered his brother and taken away the jewel. Krishna retrieved the jewel from Jambuvanta, king of bears and also got his daughter Jambuvati in marriage. After this, Krishna returned with Jambuvati and the jewel and handed over the jewel to Satrajit. To make amends, Satrajit gave his daughter, Satyabhama, to Krishna in marriage along with the jewel.

Cast and Crew :

Reba Kanta Mahanta
Rana Mahanta
Nuruddin Ahmed
Bibhuti Mahanta
Ajoy Baruah
Dilip Saikia
Pranjal Mahanta
Tirtha Dutta
Khanin Pator
Bubul Dutta
Paban Kakoti
Kamal Dutta
Mahendra Bora
Monuranjan Mahanta
Rubul Mahanta
Nilanjan Mahanta
Nitu Bordoloi
Jodumoni Mahanta
Prabal Neog
Jyotishman Mahanta
Papu Kakoti
Srimanta Dutta
Paramananda Konwar

Processions
20 - 29 October, 2010, Time 11am - 12 pm & 5pm - 6pm

Kummatti
Mask performance, Kerala
Folkland
Coordinator: K. Sureshan

Kummatti is a famous, colourful folk dance of Kerala, in the South Malabar in particular. During the festival of Onam, *Kummattikali* performers travel from house to house, collecting small gifts and entertaining people. Costume is the most interesting feature of Kummatti. The performers don heavily painted colourful masks depicting faces of Krishna, Narada, Ganapathi, old man, woman, Kiratha, Darika, hunters etc. Dancers wear skirts, woven out of plaited grass. Some performers cover their whole body with grass for a bushy appearance. They also hold and manipulate long sticks of residuary agricultural produce called *kummatti*; it is from this that the dance derives its name. The dance is related to Shaiva myths. *Thamma* (an old woman) walks in front with the help of a stick. *Thamma* represents the Mother of the Universe. According to another myth, Kummattis are the *bhoothaganas* (ghouls and spirit companions of Lord Shiva). They visit all the households in the village to rid them of evil spirits. Rhythm for the dance movements is provided by vibrating the string of a bow-like instrument called *onavillu*. Areca nut wood is used to make this bow and the strings are beaten with a narrow bamboo stick.

Cast and Crew:
K. Sureshan
Ganeshan
Kunhiraman
Kumar
Ratheesh
Biju
Sumesh
Sajith
Bineesh
Prashant
Rajesh
Nishant
Sunilkumar
Rajesh P.
Sureshan

Pulikali
Tiger Dance, Kerala
Folkland
Coordinator: B.Satheeshan

Pulikali (puli means 'leopard/tiger' and kali means 'play' in Malayalam, also known as Kaduvakali) is performed by trained artistes to entertain people on the occasion of Onam. On the fourth day of the festival, performers painted like tigers and hunters in bright yellow, red, and black, dance to the beats of the percussion instruments like udukku and thakil. Literal meaning of Pulikali is the 'play of the tigers'; hence the performance revolves around the theme of tiger hunting. The origin of Pulikali dates back over 200 years when the Maharaja Ramavarma (Sakthan Thampuran) is said to have introduced the form, known as pulikkettikali and performed during the Muharram.

Cast and Crew:
B.Satheeshan
Narayanan
Manoharan
Sasidharan
Sujan
Mohanan
Sasi Mangad
Chandran
Rajesh
Ganeshan
Kumar
Suresh kumar
Narayanan
Ashokan

Sintu Nritya

Mask Performance, Himachal Pradesh
Asara Cultural Troupe
Coordinator: Joginder Singh Habbi

In Himachali dialect, Sintu refers to a 'cub'. This dance is performed wearing masks of lion, bear, birds etc. Sintu Nritya is performed on the festive occasions of Devparva, Deepawali and Ekadasi. Women offer nut and parched grain to worship the devi vahan (vehicle of the goddess), Sintu. This dance not only reminds us of the age old traditions and faith in the village devta (deity), but also spreads the message to protect animals and preserve our environment. Sintu is also a dance drama in Himachal. Musical instruments such as dhol, nagara, ransingha and karnal hudak are used for the performance.

Cast and Crew:

Joginder Singh Habbi
Jash Ram Thakur
Ram Lal Verma
Ami Chand
Bulbir Singh
Saroj Kumari
Seema Kumari
Reena Kumari
Sarswati Kumari
Parmesh Kumar
Sundeep Kumar
Rajender Kumar
Dinesh Kumar
Surender Kumar
Dharam Pal
Sundeep Kumar
Jitender Kumar
Shelendra Sain
Bihari Lal Sharma
Parmod Kumar

Chapprakattu

Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu
Thangavelu Kuzhu
Coordinator: T.Gobinath

Chapprakattu or Vilakkukattu (Mobile shrine), is a ritual performance associated with religious processions in Kerala and some parts of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Chapprakattu is about 6 ft high and is made of chattams (wooden frames), adorned with flowers, gold and silver ornaments. The images of local deities are placed in the Chapprakattu. The performers lift the shrine on their head and dance to the rhythm of the chendamelam (percussion instrumental ensemble) during the ritual ceremonies of Bhagavathiamman temple. This performance is considered as sacred by the devotees of the particular temple and they worship the mobile shrine during its processions. Traditionally men belonging to the castes of Yadavas or Maniyanis, Thiyyas or Ezhavas, Mukayas, Saliyas etc. perform Chapprakattu.

Cast and Crew:

T.Gobinath
G. Thangavel
S. Ragukumar
R. Manikandan
P. Thirumani
M. Manikandan
M. Chinathambi
M. Kumar
G. Mookan
S. Sankili
M. Mathan
A. Perumal
R. Ramalingam
Sugumaran
Pavanasam
R.Sasi
S.Viji

Hill Jatra

Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand
Nabodaya Group
Coordinator: Shri Hemraj Singh Bisht

The word 'Hill' is derived from hal (plough) and 'Jatra' means a village festival. Hill Jatra therefore, is a festival honouring the hal (plough). It is celebrated in Pithoragarh District of Uttarakhand. This jatra is held to ensure a good harvest.

The main character of Hill Jatra is Lakhia Bhoot. It is believed that Lakhia came out of the matted locks of Lord Shiva during the incident of Sati Bhasam (immolation of Sati/Gauri), his consort. So Lakhia Bhoot is also called Lateshwer. Lakhia is worshiped as Bhumiyal devata of Kumour village. Besides Lakhia, the centre of attraction of Hill Jatra is a deer made of white cloth which is also worshipped as a deity.

Cast and Crew:

Shri Hemraj Singh Bisht
Shri Rajendra Singh Bisht
Shri Sandeep Singh Bisht
Shri Rajendra Chauthiya
Shri Prakash Vishvakarma
Shri Shekhar Chandra
Shri Nirmal Singh Bhandari
Shri Bheem Ram Kohlee
Shri Gopal Ram
Shri Banshi Lal
Shri Sundar Ram
Shri Santosh Ram
Shri Narendra Ram
Shri Indra Prasad
Shri Rajendra Prasad
Shri Govinda Prasad
Shri Mahesh Ram
Shri Bhupal Singh
Shri Bhupendra Chandra
Shri Ramesh Ram.

Sahi Jatra

Puri, Orissa
Coordinator: Jitendra Muduli

Sahi Jatra is performed in Puri during the month of Chaitra (April) on the day of Ramnavami. The very essence of Puri is the so-called sahi (wide lanes or main streets). In Orissa, the term sahi is frequently used in towns like Cuttack, Berampur, Balesore etc. The most attractive feature in Sahi Jatra is the grand procession. The non winding procession crawls through many crossings which are turned into performing arenas by acrobats, tumblers, dancers, the nagas, the medhas of various deities and demons. While the nagas are symbolic of valour, the medhas represent various gods, goddesses and demons. This type of processions has close similarities with the Ramlila of Varanasi. The star attractions in the Jatra are the characters of Rama, Ravana, Parasuram, Hanuman, Sugrib and Angad etc.

Cast and Crew:

Jitendra Muduli
Rajkishore Pradhan
Durga Prasad Pandey
Akshya Kumar Pradhan
Prabhat Kumar Beja
Dillip Kumar Muduli
Bhagaban Panda
Gopal Barik
Bibekananda Mohanty
Gangadhar Behera

Demonstrations by Master Craftsmen
20 October to 20 November, 2010, Time 11am - 8.30 pm

Gambhira Mask (West Bengal)

Gambhira, one of the oldest folk theatre traditions of West Bengal, is prevalent today only in the Maldah district of the state. Wearing huge decorated wooden masks, villagers dance to please the deities for substantial rain and good crops. The accompanying musical instrument is a drum (*dhol*), beaten loudly while dancing. These masks are highly stylized. The mask of Goddess Kali, for example, is characterized by black complexion and long thrust-out red tongue; that of Lord Shiva by white complexion, knotted hair with snakes and a third eye on his forehead. The demons have large pointed ears and a cock-crest shaped ridge on their heads.

Demonstrators

Shri Sanjulal Sarkar

Shri Nitai Sarkar

Shri Sankar Das

Chadar Badar (Santhal Puppetry)

Chadar Badar is a unique form of puppetry practiced by Santhal Adivasis. It is distinct from the common forms of puppets that are prevalent in the other parts of India. The puppets are seven to nine inches long, carved out in wood and their movements are guided by a marvellous mechanism, supported by many levers. The puppeteer tugs the main cord which pulls the main lever, which in turn pushes a few small sticks upward and some downward; the limbs of the miniature puppets are attached with these sticks to make the puppets move. The puppeteer follows the beat of the drum and makes the puppets dance in unison.

Ravi Kant Dwivedi

Demonstrators

Ravi Kant Dwivedi (Coordinator)

Bhulu Murmu (Master Puppeteer)

Shibdhan Murmu (Master Performer)

Sonadhan Murmu

Santosh Soren

Anil Hansda

Benir Putul Naach
(Glove Puppetry, West Bengal)

Benir Putul Naach is found mainly in the Padmatamli village of the Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal. It has been a means of earning livelihood for a long time. In recent years, it received wider recognition outside the state as well, through the efforts of local Panchayat Samiti. Usually, it is a show of two puppets - one male and the other female. The puppets are played by skillful movements of six fingers connected with the two heads and the four hands of the puppets. The heads and hands of the puppets are usually made of paper pulp and attractively dressed with silk or cotton clothes, garlands of beads and ribbons. Small bells are fastened around the hands of the puppets, which ring sonorously in rhythm with the moving puppets.

Demonstrators

Basanta Kumar Ghorai

Bishnupada Ghorai

Arabinda Ghorai

Patam Katha
(Scroll Narration, Andhra Pradesh)

Patam or Scroll is a big canvas with images of a story painted on it. The stories are mainly creation myths of a particular community. The artists who use scroll for their narration are from certain caste groups, who have the right to get tyaagam (financial assistance) from the respective castes. Communities like Maasaiah, Korrajula, Dakkali, Gurrapu, Kaakipadigela, Eenootti, Gaudajetti, Addapu, Puujari, Kuunapuli are associated with this tradition. These artists, once in two, three or five years, visit a village, meet the village community head and ask him to fix a specific amount of cash and kind for tyaagam. Once it is fixed, they narrate stories as per the request of the village. The caste myths such as Naabhikaapuranam (Addapu) Gaurapuraanam (Eenootti and Gaudajetti), Maarkandeeyapuraanam (Kuunapuli), Padmanaayakapuraanam (Korrajula & Puujari), Bheetaalapuraanam/Maalacennaiah Katha (Gurrapu), Jaambapuraanam (Dakkali) and Madeelupuraanam (Maasaiah) are widely narrated. Korrajula, a community of Nayakpod tribe, narrates the myth of Padmanaayaka Vruttaantam. Along with that they also narrate stories of the Mahabharata.

Nakasis, the professional painters belonging to Mere caste paint figures on cloth. Traditionally they used to prepare the colours for paintings themselves. Nowadays, readymade colours are used. Twenty to thirty-five feet of cloth is used for traditional scroll painting. The cloth is soaked in water and then dried. Cooked tamarind or rice paste is applied on it and dried again. This process is repeated until the cloth gets sturdy enough to be used as canvas for painting. The canvas is tightly fixed and the thick liquid is evenly spread over the entire cloth, with the help of a round stick. Nakasis prepare traditional scroll narratives as per the request and requirement of the respective artist groups.

N. Bhakthavathsala Reddy

Demonstrators

N. Bhakthavathsala Reddy (Coordinator)

Nakasi Scroll painters:

D. Nageswar

D. Padma

D. Venkataramana

Korrajula Scroll narrators:

Jnaanam Kanakaiah

Soma Saraiah

Soma Sambaiah

Gaudajetti Scroll narrators:

M. Bixapathi

M. Sammaiah

E. Ramesh

The Kaavad Tradition (Rajasthan)

Kaavad is a popular story telling tradition of Mewar and Marwar regions in Rajasthan. A portable, painted, wooden shrine is made by the *kaavad* makers (Basayati Suthars) of Bassi, Chittor, for the storytellers (*kaavadiya bhats* or *ravs*) of Marwar. The storytellers unfold the multiple panels of the *kaavad* as they recite for their patrons (*jajmans*) spread across Rajasthan and adjoining states.

The portable shrine of *kaavad* is iconic of a temple, its presence sanctifies the patron's place; the moment the portals open they create an entry into a sacred space. The recitation includes narration of stories and genealogies by the storyteller, simulating an experience of travel, a passage not unlike a pilgrimage. The experience of a pilgrimage begins with travel; journeying towards a sacred space; with leaving behind all that is mundane, routine and anchored in the everyday practice of life. In the *kaavad*, this rite of passage can be equated to the act of turning the panels or doors and entering new spaces leading all the way to the sanctum sanctorum. Pilgrims endure hardships on their path to the pilgrimage place; the *kaavad* patrons identify with stories and experience hardships by proxy.

The *kaavad* is a continued source of validation, a mnemonic for myth and memory. Performed over the ages, it is central to the lives of its community, not as a handicraft object, but as a bearer of memory. It survives because it represents the collective consciousness.

- Nina Sabnani

Demonstrators

Khoja Ram Kumhar (Storyteller)

Satya Narayan Suthar (Artist)

Phad (Rajasthan)

Phads are the visual backdrops for the performance of the Pabuji and Dev Narayan, two popular deified heroes of Rajasthan. The paintings are created on the cloth so that the singer can roll them up and take them from place to place. Professional artists called Joshis have been painting them for many generations. Each painting follows a prescribed program of scenes that depict the deity in the central court surrounded by many other courts and scenes from the story. Singers illuminate the scenes with an oil lamp and point to them as they chant the story during all-night performances which they call 'reading *phad*'. It is through the synergy of the artist and the performers that the stories of Pabuji and Dev Narayan come alive and the genius of this art continues.

Demonstrators

Kalyan Joshi (Coordinator)

Pabuji ka Phad

Pabulal Bhopa

Sukhi Devi

Rakesh

Dev Narayan ji ka Phad

Gopal Joshi

Peeru Ram Bhopa

Mevaram Gujar

Devkishan Bhopa

Ramdev Bhopa

Rambakhsh

Kalyan Mal

Ramphool

Devnarayan

Piru Ram

Sukha Ram

Rupa Ram

Kaavad Singers

Gopal Joshi

Khoja Ram

Pat (West Bengal)

Pats are a popular storytelling tradition in Bengal. Artists and narrators of pats are predominantly from the Muslim community. Chitrakars make the scrolls and patuas narrate the story. These scrolls narrate stories from the Ramayana , the Mahabharata and the Puranas. Gazir pats of Murshidabad depict the epic story of Pir Gazi. Among the most popular scrolls of the patua tradition of Bengal are the Manasa scrolls. Manasa, a popular snake goddess has a large following and is widely worshipped in the region. She has a cycle of sung narratives attached to her called Manasa Mangal, also the subject matter of the scrolls. Jadu pats of Santhals illustrate images of tribal and folk deities riding on various animals. However, they also adopt stories from the Hindu mythology.

Demonstrators

Karuna Chitrakar

Ajay Chitrakar

Mamin Chitrakar

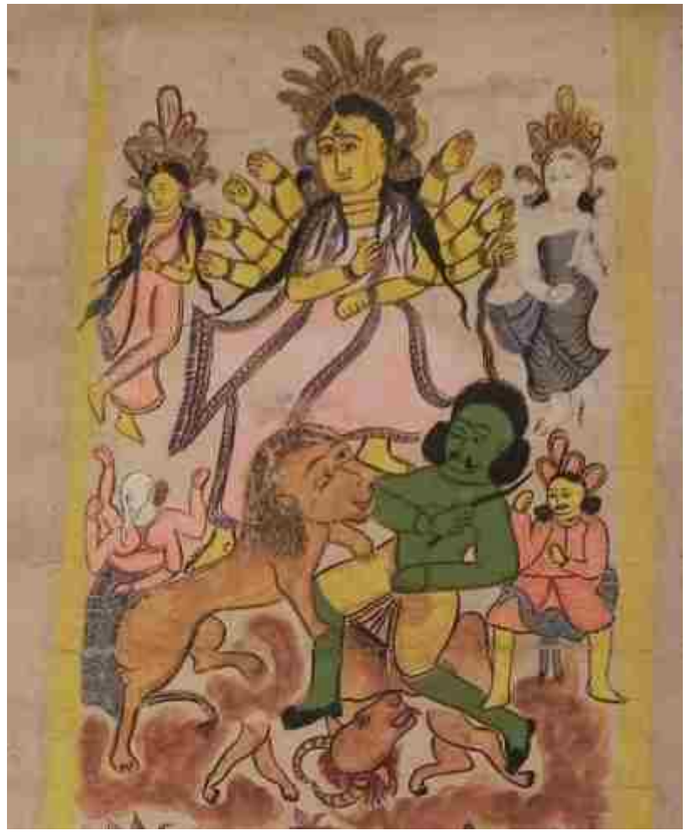
Rani Chitrakar Group

Shyam Sundar Chitrakar

Prabir Chitrakar

Mantu Chitrakar

Jaba Chitrakar



Public Lectures
26 - 30 October, 2010, Time 11am

Inaugural Lecture - 26-10-2010

Masks Unmasked, Puppets Inanimate and Animate, Stories within Stories

Dr. (Smt.) Kapila Vatsyayan

Founder Trustee & Former Academic Director, IGNCA & well-known scholar on Indian Arts & Culture

27-10-2010

Makers of Tales: Kaavad Tradition of Rajasthan

Film Screening (21mins 46 sec) & Lecture

Dr. Nina Sabnani

The Makers of Tales presents an emic perspective on the *kaavad* storytelling tradition of Rajasthan. A lesser known tradition, the *kaavad* is a painted portable shrine made by the Suthar community of Mewar for the Kaavadiya Bhats of Marwar. The Bhats are itinerant storytellers that use the *kaavad* to narrate localized versions of the great Hindu Epics. Along with this, they also recite the genealogies of their patrons. Within the sacred space of the *kaavad* shrine, the painters also create a niche for the patrons, who make donations to have their own images depicted on the shrine alongside the gods and the saints. In the film, the practitioners talk about the current scenario and the difficulty of sustaining their tradition.

Nina Sabnani graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts, MS University, Vadodara and trained further at NID, in Animation Film Design. She pursued her MA at the Newhouse School, Syracuse University, New York, USA, as a recipient of the Fulbright Fellowship. She taught at the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad in the areas of Animation and Visual Communication until 2007.

Nina has experimented with transposing artistic styles into animation. *Shubh Vivah* uses the Madhubani style of painting to dwell on the anti-dowry issue. *All About Nothing,* an early stop-motion film, is a conjecture about the birth of zero in India. *Mukand and Riaz* and *Tanko Bole Chhe* are both animated documentaries about memory and identity, using textiles, embroidery and appliqué.

Currently, she is an Associate Professor at the Industrial Design Centre, IIT Bombay. Her Doctoral research focuses on the Kaavad storytelling tradition of Rajasthan.

28-10-2010

Through the Eyes of a Modern Practitioner: Traditional and Modern forms of Indian Puppetry

Sh. Dadi D. Pudumjee

An illustrated talk showing some of the existing traditional and modern forms of Indian puppetry, along with a demonstration of the way Dadi uses his form and content to communicate ideas ranging from the abstract to the social concerns.

Dadi Pudumjee is the Managing Trustee and Artistic Director of The Ishara Puppet Theatre Trust. He is also the President of Union Internationale de la Marrionette (UNIMA) (World Puppet Organisation).

Born in Pune, Dadi started his career in puppetry there as a hobby; later he received further training from the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad and also under late Meher R. Contractor at the Darpana Academy of Performing Arts. In 1980, he set up the Sutradhar Puppet Theatre at the Shri Ram Centre for Art and Culture, New Delhi, India's first contemporary puppet theatre repertory company and was its Artistic Director till 1986. Dadi set up the Ishara Puppet Theatre, in 1986, which is one of India's leading modern puppet theatre groups, working with puppets, actors and dancers, creating a style which is a synthesis between the East and the West. He was awarded by Sangeet Natak Academy, the National Award, for his work on puppetry. Besides directing performances for Ishara, Dadi conducts workshops on puppetry and allied arts for various agencies, schools and institutions in India and abroad.

29-10-2010

Indian Picture Showmen: Tradition and Transformation

Prof. Jyotindra Jain

Though in all cultures, verbal (textual or oral) narrative may exist independently of the visual (pictorial) narrative, the art of the "picture showmen" endeavours to complement the word with the visual image and vice versa. From the early literary sources, it is evident that the tradition of wandering teachers-cum-picture storytellers was ancient and widely popular. Even today, there are wandering picture storytellers who carry painted scrolls showing the punishments of hell as well as popular religious stories.

Beliefs, practices and terminologies, associated with the ritual context of some of the painted panels and scrolls of storytellers, reveal that these not only serve as visual aids to stories narrated, but have the status of a sacred object or shrine.

The illustrated talk will deal with the living traditions of picture showmen from West Bengal, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh and touch upon the issues of contemporary transformations of some of these traditions.

Jyotindra Jain, Member Secretary of Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, has been the Senior Director of Crafts Museum and a Professor of Arts and Aesthtics at Jawaharlal Nehru University. He has published extensively on India's folk art, as well as on the visual popular culture.

30-10-2010

Minding Demons, Masking Gods: The Prahlada Nataka of Orissa

Prof. John Emigh

The *Prahlada Nataka (Play of Prahlada),* was written in the Oriya language, in approximately 1880 and attributed to Raja Rama Krishna Chhottaray Deva, Zamindar of Jalantara (now in Andhra Pradesh.); it is a relatively recent recasting of a very old Puranic story in which Vishnu's man-lion avatar Narashimha rescues a child from his demon father's murderous rage. While the former Court at Jalantara is now in ruins, the play is still being performed by over 50 village theatre troupes, mostly in the adjacent Ganjam District of Orissa. The history of its spread from court to town to village offers object lessons, both in how the performing arts may respond to crisis situations and in the complexity of social interactions in Eastern India, and complicates many of the received ways of thinking about patronage, caste and the court-village axis in colonial and post-colonial India. The evolution of the form reveals a remarkable confluence of interests of persons, all working outside of their "normal" caste functions in the creation of a syncretic form, employing "classical" and "folk" elements that have responded to local needs and demands while growing farther and farther away from Western theatrical models. The spectacular masks, used by the (frequently) entranced priest-performers who portray Narasimha, are striking examples of powerful and fearful images used in India and beyond to counter and contain "demonic" forces. Extensive use of images and video will accompany this lecture.

John Emigh (MFA, PhD) is Professor Emeritus of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies at Brown University (USA), where he taught and directed from 1967 to 2009. He was the founding Chairperson of the Association for Asian Performance, is the author of *Masked Performance: The Play of Self and Other in Ritual and Theatre* (U Penn, 1996) and other writings on South and Southeast Asian performance, has served on the governing board of Performance Studies international, and in 1996 was the principle consultant for IGNCA's exhibition *Masks, Mind, and Man* and its accompanying seminar "Purusha, Persona, and Person". He has directed over 75 plays in university and professional theatres and has performed one-person shows based on Balinese *topeng* (masked dance and theatre) throughout the US and Asia. In 2009, he received the Association for Theatre in Higher Education in America's Career Achievement Award for Educational Theatre.

Stage Performances & Processions 20 - 29 Oct, 2010

No.3, Rajendra Prasad Road, New Delhi-110001

Inaugural Ceremony: 20 Oct, 5 pm,

IGNCA, 11 Mansingh Road, New Delhi

S. No.	Date	Processions 11.00 am to 12.00 pm & 5.00 pm to 6.00 pm	Puppet Performances 6.30 pm to 7.15 pm	Mask Performances 7.20 pm to 8 pm
1	20 October	Sahi Jatra (Orissa), Sintu Nritya (Himachal Pradesh), Hill Jatra (Pithoragarh) Ramman (Garhwal), Chhau/Chho (Saraikella), Chapprakkattu (Mobile Shrine & Chenda Melam (Tamil Nadu)	A Celebratory Performance with Puppets Masks and Movements Director: Dadi D. Pudumjee, Ishara Puppet Theatre, New Delhi	
2	21 October	Sahi Jatra (Orissa), Sintu Nritya (Himachal Pradesh), Hill Jatra (Pithoragarh) Ramman (Garhwal), Chapprakkattu (Mobile Shrine) & Chenda Melam (Tamil Nadu)	DURYODHANA VADHAM (Pava Kathakali) (Glove Puppets) Director: G. Venu Natana Kairali Group, Kerala	CHHAU/ CHHO (Saraikela) Coordinator: Shashadhar Archarya Acharya Chhau Nrutya Bichitra Group Jharkhand
3	22 October	Sahi Jatra (Orissa), Sintu Nritya (Himachal Pradesh), Chhau/Chho (Saraikela) Hill Jatra (Pithoragarh), Chhau (Purulia), Chapprakkattu (Mobile shrine) & Chenda Melam (Tamil Nadu)	KALPATARU (The Wishing Tree) Director: Dadi Pudumjee The Ishara Puppet Theatre Trust New Delhi	RAMMAN Coordinator: Dr. Kushal Singh Bhandari Saloor Dungra Group Uttarakhand
4	23 October	Sahi Jathra (Orissa), Sintu Nritya (Himachal Pradesh), Chhau/Chho (Saraikela) Hill Jatra (Pithoragarh), Chhau (Purulia), Chapprakkattu (Mobile Shrine) Ramman (Garhwal) & Chenda Melam (Tamil Nadu)	AMAR SINGH RATHORE Kathputli ka Khel (String Puppets) Director: Puran Bhat Aakaar Puppet Theatre, New Delhi	CHHAU/ CHHO (Purulia) Coordinator: Dilip Mahato Binapani Rupchand Chhau Dance Group West Bengal
5	24 October	Sintu Nritya (Himachal Pradesh), Hill Jatra (Pithoragarh) Puli Kali (Kerala), Kummattikali (Kerala) Chapprakkattu (Mobile Shrine), & Chenda Melam (Tamil Nadu)	SUNDARA KANDA Tolu Bommalatta, (Shadow Puppets) Director: Hanumant Rao Anjaneyulu Shadow Puppet Theatre, Andhra Pradesh	KALIATTAM Coordinator: Peter Arockia Raj Kalaimamani Muthukumar Kalai Kuzhu Tamil Nadu
6	25 October	Chhau/ Chho (Purulia), Puli Kali (Kerala), Kummattikali (Kerala) Kaliattam (Tamil Nadu), Chapprakkattu (Mobile Shrine) & Chenda Melam (Tamil Nadu)	TAMING OF THE WILD Director: Sudip Gupta Dolls Theatre, West Bengal	GULIKAN AND POTTAN THEYYAM Coordinator: Dr. V. Jayarajan Folkland, Kerala
7	26 October	Kaliattam (Tamil Nadu), Kummattikali (Kerala), Puli Kali (Kerala) Lahaul Spiti (Himachal Pradesh), Ankiya Naat (Assam), Mukha Bhaona (Assam) Chapprakkattu (Mobile Shrine) & Chenda Melam (Tamil Nadu)	CHOODAMANI - LANKADAHANA Yakshagana (String Puppets) Director: Bhaskar Kogga Kamath Sri Ganesha Yakshagana Gombeyata Mandali, Karnataka	YAK DANCE (Singhi Chaam) Coordinator: R.D. Lepcha Singhi Chham Group Sikkim
8	27 October	Kaliattam, Theyyam (Kerala), Puli Kali (Kerala), Kummattikali (Kerala) Lahaul Spiti (Himachal Pradesh), Ankiya Nat (Assam), Mukha Bhaona (Assam) Chapprakkattu (Mobile Shrine) Yak Dance (Sikkim) & Chenda Melam (Tamil Nadu)	KAMBA RAMAYANA Tholpavai Koothu, (Shadow Puppets) Director: Ramachandra Pulavar Krishnankutty Pulavar Memorial Tolpava Koothu & Puppet Centre, Kerala	AJI LHAMU Coordinator: Ajoy Sidasow Arunachal Pradesh
9	28 October	Mukha Bhaona (Assam), Yak (Sikkim), Lahaul Spiti (Himachal Pradesh), Theyyam (Kerala), Puli Kali (Kerala), Kummattikali (Kerala) Chapprakkattu (Mobile Shrine) & Chenda Melam (Tamil Nadu)	ARANNYER RODAN (Crying of the Forest) Daanger Putul Naach (Rod Puppet) Director: Nirapada Mondal Satya Narayan Putul Natya Sanstha, West Bengal	RAM VIJAYA (Ankiya Naat) Coordinator: Hiroprasad Mahanta Jakhalabandha, Assam
10	29 October	Aji Lhamu (Arunachal Pradesh), Lahaul Spiti (Himachal Pradesh) Theyyam (Kerala), Puli Kali (Kerala), Kummattikali (Kerala), Yak Dance (Sikkim) Chapprakkattu (Mobile Shrine) & Chenda Melam (Tamil Nadu)	RAMAYANA Ravan Chhaya (Shadow Puppets) Director: Khageswar Pradhan Ravan-Chhaya Natya Sansad, Orissa	SYAMANTAKA HARANA NATAKA (Mukha Bhaona) Coordinator: Reba Kanta Mahanta Khatpar Sattra, Sivasagar, Assam

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Date	Film & Duration
21 October	Faces of God 27mts.
22 October	Mukha Naach
23 October	Behind the Mask (Part I &II)59mts.
24 October	Hemis34mts.
25 October	Man and Mask18mts.
26 October	Chadar Badar30mts.
27 October	Mask Dances of Indonesia, 11mts. Mask Dances of Zimbabwe, 11mts.
28 October	Mask Dance of Bhutan17mts.
29 October	Mask Dances of Japan08mts.

Interactive Multimedia CD-ROM, "Man & Mask"

The Interactive Multimedia CD-ROM on "Man & Mask" presents an overview of the IGNCA database comprising of mask images from about 20 countries of the world. The touch screen based kiosks placed in the exhibition will help the user to browse through the collection either by eight geographical regions, countries or specific locations or by individual or groups of masks, classified in over sixty categories.